

AN  
E X P O S I T I O N,

WITH  
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE  
BOOK OF THE PROPHET

ISAIAH.

---

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

*gelical Prophet*, and by some of the ancients, *a fifth Evangelist*. We shall have the general title of this book, v. 1. and therefore shall here only observe some things,

- I. Concerning the prophet himself; he was (if we may believe the tradition of the Jews) of the royal family, his father being (they say) brother to king Uzziah: however, he was much at court, especially in Hezekiah's time, as we find in his story; to which many think it is owing that his style is more curious and polite than that of some other of the prophets, and, in some places, exceedingly lofty and soaring. The Spirit of God sometimes served his own purpose by the particular genius of the prophet; for prophets were not speaking *trumpets through* which the Spirit spake, but speaking *men*, by whom the Spirit spake, making use of their natural powers, in respect both of light and flame, and advancing them above themselves.
- II. Concerning the prophecy; it is transcendently excellent and useful; it was so to the church of God then, serving for conviction of sin, direction in duty, and consolation in trouble. Two great distresses of the church are here referred to, and comfort prescribed in reference to them; That by Sennacherib's invasion, which happened in his own time, and that of the captivity in Babylon, which happened long after; in the supports and encouragements laid up for each of these times of need we find abundance of the grace of the gospel. There are not so many quotations in the gospels out of any, perhaps not out of all, the prophecies of the Old Testament, as out of this; nor such express testimonies concerning Christ; witness that of his being born of a virgin, (*ch. 7.*) and that of his sufferings, *ch. 53.* The beginning of this book abounds most with reproofs for sin, and threatenings of judgment; the latter end of it is full of good words and comfortable words; this method the Spirit of Christ took formerly in the prophets, and does still; first to convince, and then to comfort; and those who would be blessed with the comforts, must submit to the convictions. Doubtless, Isaiah preached many sermons, and delivered many messages, to the people, which are not written in this book, as Christ did; and, probably, these sermons were delivered more largely and fully than they are here related: but so much is left on record as Infinite Wisdom thought fit to convey to us *on whom the ends of the world are come*; and these prophecies, as well as the histories of Christ, are written, *that we might believe on the name of the Son of God, and that, believing, we might have life through his name; for to us is the gospel here preached, as well as unto them who lived then, and more clearly.* O that it may be mixed with faith!

## ISAIAH.

### CHAP. I.

The first verse of this chapter is intended for a title to the whole book, and it is probable that this was the first sermon that this prophet was appointed to publish, and to affix in writing (as Calvin thinks the custom of the prophets was) to the door of the temple, as with us proclamations are fixed to public places, that all might read them; (Hab. ii. 2.) and those who would, might take out authentic copies of them; the original being, after some time, laid up by the priests among the records of the temple. The sermon which is contained in this chapter has in it, I. A high charge exhibited, in God's name, against the Jewish church and nation: 1. For their ingratitude, v. 2, 3. 2. For their incorrigibility, v. 5. 3. For the universal corruption and degeneracy of the people, v. 4, 6, 21, 22. 4. For the perversion of justice by their rulers, v. 23. II. A sad complaint of the judgments of God, which they had brought upon themselves by their sins, and by which they were brought almost to utter ruin, v. 7.-9. III. A just rejection of those shows and shadows of religion, which they kept up among them, notwithstanding this general defection and apostasy, v. 10.-15. IV. An earnest call to repentance and reformation, setting before them life and death; life if they complied with the call, and death, if they did not, v. 16.-20. V. A threatening of ruin to those who would not be reformed, v. 24, 28.-31. VI. A promise of a happy reformation at last, and a return to their primitive purity and prosperity, v. 25.-27. And all this is to be applied by us, not only to the communities we are members of, in their public interests, but to the state of our own souls.

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

Here is, 1. The name of the prophet, *Isaiah*; or *Jesaiahu*, for so it is in the Hebrew; which, in the New Testament, is read *Esaias*. His name signifies, *the salvation of the Lord*. A proper name for a prophet by whom God gives knowledge of salvation to his people, especially for this prophet, who prophesies so much of Jesus the Saviour, and the great salvation wrought out by him. He is said to be *the son of Amoz*; not Amos the prophet, the two names in the Hebrew differ more than in the English; but, as the Jews think, of Amoz the brother, or son, of Amaziah king of Judah; a tradition as un-

certain as that rule which they give, That where a prophet's father is named, he also was himself a prophet. The prophets, pupils and successors, are indeed often called their *sons*, but we have few instances, if any, of their own sons being their successors.

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

3. The subject of the prophecy; it was what *he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem*, the country of the two tribes, and that city which was their metropolis; and there is little in it relating to Ephraim, or the ten tribes, of whom there is so much in the prophecy of Hosea. Some chapters there are in this book, which relate to Babylon, Egypt, Tyre, and some other neighbouring nations; but it takes its title from that which is the main substance of it, and it is therefore said to be concerning *Judah and Jerusalem*; the other nations spoken of are such as the people of the Jews had concerns with. Isaiah brings to them in a special manner, (1.) Instruction, for it is the privilege of Judah and Jerusalem, that to them pertain the oracles of God. (2.) Reproof and threatening; for in Judah, where God is known, if in Salem, where his name is great, iniquity be found, they, sooner than any other, shall be reckoned with for it. (3.) Comfort and encouragement in evil times; for the children of Zion shall be joyful in their king.

4. The date of the prophecy; he prophesied *in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah*. By this it appears, (1.) That he prophesied long; especially if (as the Jews say) he was at last put to death by Manassah, to a cruel death, being sawn asunder; to which some suppose the apostle refers, Heb. xi. 37. From the year that king Uzziah died, (ch. vi. 1.) to Hezekiah's sickness and recovery, was 47 years; how much before, and after, he prophesied, is not certain; some reckon 60, and others 80 years in all. It was an honour to him, and a happiness to his country, that he was continued so long in his usefulness: and we must suppose both that he began young, and that he held out to old age; for the prophets were not tied, as the priests were, to a certain age, for the beginning or ending of their ministration. (2.) That he passed through a variety of times. Jotham was a good king, and Hezekiah a better, who, no doubt, gave encouragement to, and took advice from, this prophet, were patrons to him, and he privy-counsellor to them; but between them, and when Isaiah was in the prime of his time, the reign of Ahaz was very profane and wicked; then, no doubt, he was frowned upon at court, and, it is likely, forced to abscond; good men and good ministers must expect bad times in this world, and prepare for them. Then religion was run down to that degree, that the *doors of the house of the Lord were shut up*, and idolatrous altars were erected in every corner of Jerusalem; and Isaiah, with all his divine eloquence and messages immediately from God himself, could not help it. The best men, the best ministers, cannot do the good they would do in the world.

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

We will hope to meet with a brighter and more pleasant scene before we come to the end of this book: but truly here, in the beginning of it, every

thing looks very had, very black, with Judah and Jerusalem. What is the wilderness of the world, if the church, the vineyard, have such a dismal aspect as this?

I. The prophet, though he speaks in God's name, yet, despairing to gain audience with the children of his people, addresses himself to the heavens and the earth, and bespeaks their attention; (v. 2.) *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth!* Sooner will the inanimate creatures hear, who observe the law, and answer the end of their creation, than this stupid senseless people. Let the lights of heaven shame their darkness, and the fruitfulness of the earth their barrenness, and the strictness of each to its time, their irregularity. Moses begins thus (Deut. xxxii. 1.) to which the prophet here refers, intimating, that now those times were come, which Moses there foretold, Deut. xxxi. 29. Or this is an appeal to heaven and earth, to angels, and then to the inhabitants of the upper and lower world; let them *judge between God and his vineyard*: can either produce such an instance of ingratitude? Note, God will be justified when he speaks, and both heaven and earth shall declare his righteousness, Mic. vi. 2. Ps. l. 6.

II. He charges them with base ingratitude, a crime of the highest nature: call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse: let heaven and earth hear, and wonder at, 1. God's gracious dealings with a peevish provoking people as they were: "I have nourished and brought them up as children; they have been well fed and well taught;" (Deut. xxxii. 6.) "I have magnified and exalted them;" (so some;) "not only made them grow, but made them great; not only maintained them, but preferred them; not only trained them up, but raised them high." Note, We owe the continuance of our lives, and comforts, and all our advancements, to God's fatherly care of us and kindness to us. 2. Their ill-natured conduct toward him, who was so tender of them; "*They have rebelled against me*," or (as some read it) "they have revolted from me; they have been deserters, nav, traitors, against my crown and dignity." Note, all the instances of God's favour to us, as the God both of our nature and of our nurture, aggravate our treacherous departures from him, and all our presumptuous oppositions to him: children, and yet rebels!

III. He attributes this to their ignorance and inconsideration: (v. 3.) The ox knows, but Israel does not. Observe, 1. The sagacity of the ox and the ass, which are not only brute creatures, but of the dullest sort: yet the ox has such a sense of duty, as to know his owner, and to serve him, to submit to his yoke, and to draw in it; the ass has such a sense of interest, as to know his master's crib or manger, where he is fed, and to abide by it; he will go to that of himself, if he is turned loose. A fine pass man is come to, when he is shamed even in knowledge and understanding by these silly animals; and is not only sent to school to them, (Prov. vi. 6, 7.) but set in a form below them, (Jer. viii. 7.) *taught more than the beasts of the earth*, (Job xxxv. 11.) and yet knowing less. 2. The sottishness and stupidity of Israel. God is their Owner and Proprietor; he made us, and his we are, more than our cattle are ours; he has provided well for us; providence is our Master's crib: yet many that are called the people of God, do not know, and will not consider this; but ask, "*What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?*" He is not our owner; and *what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?* He has no crib for us to feed at." He had complained (v. 2.) of the obstinacy of their wills; *They have rebelled against me*; here he runs it up to its cause; "*Therefore they have rebelled*, because they do not know, they do not consider." The understanding is dark

ened, and therefore the whole soul is alienated from the life of God, Eph. iv. 18. *Israel does not know*, though their land was a land of light and knowledge; *in Judah is God known*, yet, because they do not live up to what they know, it is, in effect, as if they did not know. They know; but their knowledge does them no good, because they do not consider what they know; they do not apply it to their case, nor their minds to it. Note, (1.) Even among those that profess themselves God's people, that have the advantages, and lie under the engagements, of his people, there are many that are very careless in the affairs of their souls. (2.) Inconsideration of what we *do* know, is as great an enemy to us in religion as ignorance of what we *should* know. (3.) *Therefore* men revolt from God, and rebel against him, because they do not know and consider their obligations to God, in duty, gratitude, and interest.

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

1. How he aggravates their sin, and shows the malignity that there was in it, v. 4. (1.) The wickedness was universal; they were a sinful nation, the generality of the people were vicious and profane; they were so in their national capacity, in the management of their public treaties abroad, and in the administration of public justice at home, they were corrupt. Note, It is ill with a people when sin becomes national. (2.) It was very great and heinous in its nature. They were laden with iniquity; the guilt of it, and the curse incurred by that guilt, lay very heavy upon them; it was a heavy charge that was exhibited against them, which they could never clear themselves from; their wickedness was upon them as a *talent of lead*, Zech. v. 7, 8. And their sin, as it did easily beset them, and they were prone to it, was a weight upon them, Heb. xii. 1. (3.) They came of a bad stock, they were a seed of evil-doers; treachery ran in the blood, they had it by kind, which made the matter so much the worse, more provoking and less curable; they rose up in their fathers' stead, and trod in their fathers' steps, to *fill up the measure of their iniquity*; (Numb. xxxii. 14.) they were a race and family of rebels. (4.) They were themselves debauched, did what they could to debauch others; they are not only corrupt children, born tainted, but *children that are corrupters*, that propagate vice, and infect others with it; not only sinners, but tempters, not only actuated by Satan, but agents for him. If those that are called *children, God's children*, that are looked upon as belonging to his family, be wicked and vile, their example is of the most malignant influence. (5.) Their sin was a treacherous departure from God, they were deserters from their allegiance; *They have forsaken the Lord*, to whom they had joined themselves; they are gone away backward; are alienated or separated from God, have turned the back upon him, deserted their colours, and quitted their service; when they were urged forward, they ran backward, as a *bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*, Hos. iv. 16. (6.) It was an impudent and daring defiance of him; *They have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger*, wilfully and designedly; they knew what would anger him, and that they did. Note, The backslidings of those that have professed religion, and relation to God, are in a special manner provoking to him.

2. How he illustrates it by a comparison taken from a sick and disordered body, all overspread with

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

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

1. Their kingdom was almost ruined, v. 7. So miserable were they, that both their towns and their lands were wasted, and yet so stupid, that they needed to be told this, and to have it showed them; "Look, and see how it is; your country is desolate, the ground is not cultivated, for want of inhabitants, the villages being deserted, Judg. v. 7. And thus the fields and vineyards become like deserts, *all grown over with thorns*; (Prov. xxiv. 31.) *your cities are burned with fire*, by the enemies that invade you;" (fire and sword commonly go together;) "as for the fruits of your land, which should be food for your families, strangers devour them; and, to your greater vexation, it is before your eyes, and you cannot prevent it; you starve, while your enemies surfeit on that which should be your maintenance. The overthrow of your country is as the overthrow of strangers; it is used by the invaders as one might expect it should be used by strangers."—Jerusalem itself, which was as the daughter of Zion; (the temple built on Zion was a mother, a nursing mother, to Jerusalem;) or Zion itself, the holy mountain, which had been dear to God as a daughter, was now lost, deserted, and exposed, *as a cottage in a vineyard*, which, when the vintage is over, nobody dwells in, or takes any care of, and looks as mean and despicable as a lodge, or hut, in a garden of cucumbers; and every person is afraid of coming near it, and solicitous to remove his effects out of it, as if it were a besieged city, v. 8. And some think it is the calamitous state of the kingdom, that is represented by a diseased body, v. 6. Probably, this sermon was preached in the reign of Ahaz, when Judah was invaded by the kings of Syria and Israel, the Edomites, and the Philistines, who slew many, and carried many away into captivity, 2 Chron. xxviii. 5, 17, 18. Note, National impiety and immorality bring national desolation. Canaan, the glory of all lands, mount Zion, the joy of the whole earth, both became a reproach and a ruin; and sin made them so, that great mischief-maker.

2. Yet they were not at all reformed, and therefore God threatens to take another course with them; (v. 5.) "Why should ye be stricken any



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

VI. He comforts himself with the consideration of a remnant that should be the monuments of divine grace and mercy, notwithstanding this general corruption and desolation, v. 9. See here, 1. How near they were to an utter extirpation; they were almost like Sodom and Gomorrah, in respect both of sin and ruin, grown almost so bad, that there could not have been found *ten righteous men among them*, and almost so miserable, that none had been left alive, but their country turned into a sulphureous lake. Divine Justice said, *Make them as Admah, set them as Zeboim;* but Mercy said, *How shall I do it?* Hos. xi. 8, 9. 2. What it was that saved them from it; *The Lord of hosts left unto them a very small remnant*, that were kept pure from the common apostasy, and kept safe and alive from the common calamity. This is quoted by the apostle, (Rom. ix. 27.) and applied to those few of the Jewish nation, who, in his time, embraced Christianity, when the body of the people rejected it, and in whom the promises made to the fathers were accomplished. Note, (1.) In the worst of times there is a remnant preserved from iniquity, and reserved for mercy, as Noah and his family in the deluge, Lot and his in the destruction of Sodom. Divine grace triumphs in distinguishing by an act of sovereignty. (2.) This remnant is often a very small one, in comparison with the vast numbers of revolting ruined sinners. Multitude is no mark of the true church; Christ's is a little flock. (3.) It is God's work to sanctify and save some, when others are left to perish in their impurity; it is the work of his power, as the Lord of hosts; except he had left us that remnant, there had been none left; the corrupters (v. 4.) did what they could to debauch all, and the devourers (v. 7.) to destroy all; and they would have prevailed, if God himself had not interposed to secure to himself a remnant, who are bound to give him all the glory. (4.) It is good for a people that have been saved from utter ruin, to look back, and see how near they were to it, just upon the brink of it, to see how much they owed to a few good men that stood in the gap, and that that was owing to a good God, who left them these good men. *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.*

10. Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah: 11. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of

bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. 12. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? 13. Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me: the new-moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with: *it is iniquity*, even the solemn meeting. 14. Your new-moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. 15. And when ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Here,

I. God calls to them, (but calls in vain,) to hear his word, v. 10. 1. The title he gives them is very strange, *Ye rulers of Sodom, and Ye people of Gomorrah*. This intimates what a righteous thing it had been with God to make them like Sodom and Gomorrah, in respect of ruin; (v. 9.) because they had made themselves like Sodom and Gomorrah, in respect of sin. The men of Sodom were *wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly*, (Gen. xiii. 13.) and so were the men of Judah; when the rulers were bad, no wonder the people were so. Vice overpowered virtue, for it had the rulers, the men of figure, on its side; and it outpulled it, for it had the people, the men of number, on its side: the streams being thus strong, no less a power than that of the Lord of hosts could secure a remnant, v. 9. The rulers are boldly attacked here by the prophet, as rulers of Sodom, for he knew not how to give flattering titles; the tradition of the Jews is, that for this he was impeached long after, and put to death, as having cursed the gods, and *spoken evil of the ruler of his people*. 2. His demand upon them is very reasonable; "*Hear the word of the Lord, and give ear to the law of our God;* attend to that which God has to say to you, and let his word be a law to you." The following declaration of dislike to their sacrifices, would be a kind of new law to them; though really it was but an explication of the old law; but special regard is to be had to it, as is required to the like, Ps. l. 7, 8. "*Hear this, and tremble; hear it, and take warning.*"

II. He justly refuses to hear their prayers and accept their services, their sacrifices and burnt-offerings, the fat and blood of them, (v. 11.) their attendance in his courts, (v. 12.) their oblations, their incense, and their solemn assemblies, (v. 13.) their new-moons, and their appointed feasts, (v. 14.) their devoutest addresses; (v. 15.) they are all rejected, because their hands were full of blood. Now observe,

1. There are many who are strangers, nay enemies, to the power of religion, and yet seem very zealous for the show and shadow and form of it. This sinful nation, this seed of evil-doers, these rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah, brought not to the altars of false gods, (they are not here charged with that,) but to the altar of the God of Israel, sacrifices, a multitude of them, as many as the law required, and rather more, not only peace-offerings, which they themselves had their share of, but burnt-offerings, which were wholly consumed to the honour of God; nor did they bring the torn, and lame, and sick, but fed beasts, and the fat of them, the best of the kind; they did not send others to offer their sacrifices for them, but came themselves to appear before God; they observed the instituted places, not in high-places, or groves, but in God's own courts; and the instituted time, the new-moons, and sabbaths, and appointed feasts, none of which

they omitted; nay, it should seem, they called extraordinary assemblies, and held solemn meetings, for religious worship, beside those that God had appointed; yet this was not all, they applied themselves to God not only with their ceremonial observances, but with the moral instances of devotion; they prayed, they prayed often, made many prayers, thinking they should be heard for their much speaking; nay, they were fervent and importunate in prayer, they spread forth their hands as men in earnest. Now we should have thought these, and no doubt they thought themselves, a pious, religious people; and yet they were far from being so, for, (1.) Their hearts were empty of true devotion; they came to *appear* before God, (v. 12.) *to be seen* before him; so the margin reads it; they rested in the outside of the duties, they looked no further than to be seen of men, and went no further than that which men see. (2.) Their hands were full of blood; they were guilty of murder, rapine, and oppression, under colour of law and justice. The people shed blood, and the rulers did not punish them for it; the rulers shed blood, and the people were aiding and abetting, as the elders of Jezreel were to Jezebel in shedding Naboth's blood. Malice is heart-murder, in the account of God; he that hates his brother in his heart, has, in effect, his hands full of blood.

2. When sinners are under the judgments of God, they will more easily be brought to fly to their devotions, than to forsake their sins, and reform their lives. Their country was now desolate, and their cities burnt; (v. 7.) and this awakened them to bring their sacrifices and offerings to God more constantly than they had done, as if they would bribe God Almighty to remove the punishment, and give them leave to go on in the sin. *When he slew them, then they sought him*, Ps. lxxviii. 34. *Lord, in trouble have they visited thee*, ch. xxvi. 16. Many that will readily part with their sacrifices, will not be persuaded to part with their sins.

3. The most pompous and costly devotions of wicked people, without a thorough reformation of the heart and life, are so far from being acceptable to God, that really they are an abomination to him. It is showed here in a great variety of expressions, that *to obey is better than sacrifice*; nay, that sacrifice, without obedience, is a jest, an affront and provocation to God. The comparative neglect which God here expresses of ceremonial observances, was a tacit intimation of what they would come to at last, when they would all be done away by the death of Christ; what was now made little of, would, in due time, be made nothing of. Sacrifice and offering, and prayer made in the virtue of that, thou *wouldest not*; then said I, *Lo, I come*. Their sacrifices are here represented,

(1.) As fruitless and insignificant. To what purpose is it? v. 11. They are *vain oblations*, v. 13. *In vain do they worship me*, Matth. xv. 9. It was all lost labour, and served not to answer any good intention; for, [1.] It was not looked upon as any act of duty or obedience to God; *Who has required these things at your hands?* v. 12. Not that God disowns his institutions, or refuses to stand by his own warrants; but in what they did they had not an eye to Him that required it, nor indeed did he require it of them, whose hands were full of blood, and who continued impenitent. [2.] It did not recommend them to God's favour; he delighted not in the blood of their sacrifices, for he did not look upon himself as honoured by it. [3.] It would not obtain any relief for them. They pray, but God will not hear, because they regard iniquity; (Ps. lxxvi. 18.) he would not deliver them, for though they make many prayers, none of them came from an upright heart. All their religious services turned to no account to them. Nay,

(2.) As odious and offensive, God did not only not accept them, but he did detest and abhor them. "They are *your* sacrifices, they are none of mine; I am full of them, even surfeited with them." He needed them not, (Ps. l. 10.) did not desire them, had had enough of them, and more than enough. Their coming into his courts he calls *treading them*, or trampling upon them, their very attendance on his ordinances was construed into a contempt of them. Their incense, though ever so fragrant, was an abomination to him, for it was burnt in hypocrisy, and with an ill design. Their solemn assemblies he could not away with, could not see them with any patience, nor bear the affront they gave him. The solemn meeting is iniquity; though the thing itself was not, yet, as they managed it, it was. It is a vexation, (so some read it,) a provocation, to God, to have ordinances thus prostituted, not only by wicked people, but to wicked purposes; "My soul hates them, they are a trouble to me, a burthen, an incumbrance; I am perfectly sick of them, and weary to bear them." He is never weary of hearing the prayers of the upright, but soon weary of the costly sacrifices of the wicked. He hides his eyes from their prayers, as that which he has an aversion to, and is angry at.

All this is to show, [1.] That sin is very hateful to God, so hateful that it makes even men's prayers and their religious services hateful to him. [2.] That dissembled piety is double iniquity. Hypocrisy in religion is of all things most abominable to the God of heaven. Jerom applies it to the Jews in Christ's time, who pretended a great zeal for the law and the temple, but made themselves and all their services abominable to God, by filling their hands with the blood of Christ and his apostles, and so filling up the measure of their iniquities.

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

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

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

1. They must cease to do evil, must do no more

wrong, shed no more innocent blood; that is the meaning of washing them, and *making them clean*, v. 16. It is not only sorrowing for the sin they had committed, but breaking off the practice of it for the future, and mortifying all those vicious affections and dispositions which incline them to it. Sin is defiling to the soul; our business is to wash ourselves from it by repenting of it, and turning from it to God. We must put away not only that evil of our doings, which is before the eye of the world, by refraining from the gross acts of sin, but that which is before God's eyes, the roots and habits of sin, that are in our hearts; those must be crushed and mortified.

2. They must learn to do well. This was necessary to the completing of their repentance. Note, It is not enough that we cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well. (1.) We must be doing; not cease to do evil, and then stand idle. (2.) We must be doing good, the good which the Lord our God requires, and which will turn to a good account. (3.) We must do it well, in a right manner, and for a right end; and, (4.) We must learn to do well, we must take pains to get the knowledge of our duty, be inquisitive concerning it, in care about it, and accustom ourselves to it, that we may readily turn our hands to our work, and become masters of this holy art of doing well.

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

II. A demonstration, at the bar of right reason, of the equity of God's proceeding with them; "*Come now, and let us reason together*; (*v. 18.*) while your hands are full of blood, I will have nothing to do with you, though you bring me a multitude of sacrifices: but if you wash you, and make you clean, you are welcome to draw nigh to me; come now, and let us talk the matter over." Note, Those, and those only, that break off their league with sin, shall be welcome into covenant and communion with God; he says, *Come now*, who before God forbade them his courts. See *Jam. iv. 8*. Or rather thus; there were those among them who looked upon themselves as offended by the slights God put upon the multitude of their sacrifices, as *ch. lviii. 3*. *Wherefore have we fasted*, (say they,) *and thou seest not?* They represented God as a hard Master, whom it was impossible to please; "Come," says God, "let us debate the matter fairly, and I doubt not but to make it out that *my ways are equal, but yours are unequal*." *Ezek. xviii. 25*. Note, 1. Religion has reason on its side: there is all the reason in the world that we should do as God would have us to do. 2. The God of heaven condescends to reason the case with those who contradict him and find fault with his proceedings, for *he will be justified when he speaks*, *Ps. li. 4*. The case needs only to be stated,

(as it is here very fairly,) and it will determine it self. God shows here upon what terms they stood, (as he does *Ezek. xviii. 21, 24.—xxxiii. 18, 19.*) and then leaves it to them to judge whether they were not fair.

(1.) They cannot in reason expect any more than that, if they repent and reform, they should be restored to God's favour, notwithstanding their former provocations; "This you may expect," says God, "and it is very kind; who could have the face to desire it upon any other terms?" [1.] "It is very little that is required, only that you be willing and obedient, that you consent to obey;" so some read it; "that you subject your wills to the will of God, acquiesce in that, and give up yourselves in all things to be ruled by him that is infinitely wise and good." Here is no penance imposed for their former stubbornness, nor the yoke made heavier, or bound harder, on their necks; only, "Whereas hitherto you have been perverse and refractory, and would not comply with that which was for your own good, now be tractable, be governable." He does not say, "If you be perfectly obedient," but, "If you be willingly so;" for if there be a willing mind, it is accepted. [2.] That is very great, which is promised hereupon. First, That all their sins should be pardoned to them, and should not be mentioned against them; "Though they be as red as scarlet and crimson, though you lie under the guilt of blood, yet, upon your repentance, even that shall be forgiven you, and you shall appear in the sight of God as white as snow." Note, The greatest sinners, if they truly repent, shall have their sins forgiven them, and so have their consciences pacified and purified. Though our sins have been as scarlet and crimson, a deep dye, a double dye, first in the wool of original corruption, and afterwards in the many threads of actual transgression, though we have been often dipped, by our many backslidings, into sin, and though we have lain long soaking in it, as the cloth does in the scarlet dye, yet pardoning mercy will thoroughly discharge the stain, and, being by it purged as *with hyssop, we shall be clean*, *Ps. li. 7*. If we make ourselves clean by repentance and reformation, (*v. 16.*) God will make us white by a full remission. Secondly, That they should have all the happiness and comfort they could desire; "Be but willing and obedient and you shall eat the good of the land, the land of promise; you shall have all the blessings of the new covenant, of the heavenly Canaan; all the good of that land." They that go on in sin, though they dwell in a good land, cannot with any comfort eat the good of it, guilt imbibers all; but if sin be pardoned, creature-comforts become comforts indeed.

(2.) They cannot in reason expect any other than that, if they continue obstinate in their disobedience, they should be abandoned to ruin, and the sentence of the law should be executed upon them; what can be more just? (*v. 20.*) "If you refuse and rebel, if you continue to rebel against the divine government, and refuse to obey of divine grace, you shall be devoured with the sword; with the sword of your enemies, which shall be commissioned to destroy you, with the sword of God's justice, his wrath, and vengeance, which shall be drawn against you; for this is that which the mouth of the Lord has spoken, and which he will make good, for the maintaining of his own honour." Note, Those that will not be governed by God's sceptre, will certainly and justly be devoured by his sword.

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

21. How is the faithful city become a har-

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

Here,

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

This is illustrated, (1.) By similitudes; (v. 22.) *Thy silver is become dross*; this degeneracy of the

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

II. A resolution is taken up to redress these grievances; (v. 24.) *Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel*, who has power to make good what he says, who has hosts at command for the executing of his purposes, and whose power is engaged for Israel; *Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries*. Observe, 1. Wicked people, especially wicked rulers that are cruel and oppressive, are God’s enemies, his adversaries, and shall so be accounted of, and so dealt with. If the holy seed corrupt themselves, they are the foes of his own house. 2. They are a burthen to the God of heaven, which is implied in his easing himself of them; the *Mighty One of Israel*, that can bear any thing, nay, that upholds all things, complains of his being *wearied with men’s iniquities*, ch. xliii. 24. Amos ii. 13. 3. God will find out a time and a way to ease himself of this burthen, by avenging himself on those that thus bear hard upon his patience. He here speaks as one triumphing in the foresight of it; *Ah, I will ease me*. He will ease the earth of the burthen under which it *groans*, (Rom. viii. 21, 22.) will ease his own name of the reproaches with which it is loaded.

He will be eased of his adversaries, by *taking vengeance on his enemies*; he will *spue them out of his mouth*, and so be eased of them, Rev. iii. 16. He speaks with pleasure of the *day of vengeance* being in his heart, ch. lxiii. 4. If God's professing people conform not to his image, as the *Holy One* of Israel, (v. 4.) they shall feel the weight of his hand as the *Mighty One* of Israel: his power, which was wont to be engaged for them, shall be armed against them.

Two ways God will ease himself of this grievance:

(1.) By reforming his church and restoring good judges in the room of those corrupt ones. Though the church has a great deal of dross in it, yet it shall not be thrown away, but refined; (v. 25.) "*I will surely purge away thy dross*; I will amend what is amiss. Vice and profineness shall be suppressed, and put out of countenance; oppressors displaced, and deprived of their power to do mischief." When things are ever so bad, God can set them to rights, and bring about a complete reformation; when he begins, he will make an end, will take away all the tin.

Observe, [1.] The reformation of a people is God's own work; and, if ever it be done, it is he that brings it about; "*I will turn my hand upon thee*; I will do that for the reviving of religion, which I did, at first, for the planting of it." He can do it easily, with the turn of his hand; but he does it effectually, for what opposition can stand before the arm of the Lord revealed? [2.] He does it by blessing them with good magistrates, and good ministers of state; (v. 26.) "*I will restore thy judges, as at the first*, to put the laws into execution against evil-doers; and thy counsellors, to transact public affairs, as at the beginning;" either the same persons that had been turned out, or others of the same character. [3.] He does it by restoring judgment and righteousness among them, (v. 27.) by planting in men's minds principles of justice, and governing their lives by those principles. Men may do much by external restraints; but God does it effectually by the influences of his Spirit, as a *Spirit of Judgment*, ch. iv. 4.—xxviii. 6. See Ps. lxxxv. 10, 11. [4.] The reformation of a people will be the redemption of them and their converts, for sin is the worst captivity, the worst slavery; and the great and eternal redemption is that by which *Israel is redeemed from all his iniquities*; (Ps. cxxx. 8.) and the *blessed Redeemer* is he that *turns away ungodliness from Jacob*, (Rom. xi. 26.) and *saves his people from their sins*, Matth. i. 21. All the redeemed of the Lord shall be converts, and their conversion is their redemption. *Her converts*, or, *they that return of her*; so the margin. God works deliverance for us, by preparing us for it with judgment and righteousness. [5.] The reviving of a people's virtue, is the restoring of their honour; *Afterward thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city*; First, Thou shalt be so; the reforming of the magistracy is a good step toward the reforming of the city and the country too. Secondly, Thou shalt have the *praise* of being so; and a greater praise there cannot be to any city, than to be called the *city of righteousness*, and to retrieve the ancient honour, which was lost, when the *faithful city became a harlot*, v. 21.

(2.) By cutting off those that hate to be reformed, that they may not remain either as snares, or as scandals, to the faithful city. [1.] It is an utter ruin that is here threatened. They shall be destroyed and consumed, and not chastened and corrected only. The extirpation of them will be necessary to the redemption of Zion. [2.] It is a universal ruin, which will involve the transgressors and the sinners together; the openly profane, that have quite cast off all religion, and the hypocrites, that live wicked lives under the cloak of a religious

profession—they shall both be destroyed together; for they are both alike an abomination to God, both those that contradict religion, and those that contradict themselves in their pretensions to it. And they that forsake the Lord, to whom they had formerly joined themselves, shall be consumed as the water in the conduit-pipe is soon consumed when it is cut off from the fountain. [3.] It is an inevitable ruin; there is no escaping it.

First, Their idols shall not be able to help them; the oaks which they have desired, and the gardens which they have chosen; the images, the dunhill-gods, which they have worshipped in their groves, and under the green trees, which they were fond of, and wedded to, for which they forsook the true God, and which they worshipped privately in their own gardens, even then when idolatry was publicly discontinued. This was the practice of the transgressors and the sinners; but they shall be ashamed of it, not with a show of repentance, but of despair, v. 29. They shall have cause to be ashamed of them; for after all the court they have made to them, they shall find no benefit by them; but the idols themselves shall go into captivity, ch. xli. 1, 2. Note, They that make creatures their confidence, are but preparing confusion for themselves. You were fond of the oaks and the gardens; but you yourselves shall be, 1. Like an oak without leaves, withered and blasted, and stripped of all its ornaments. Justly do those wear no leaves, that bear no fruit; as the fig-tree that Christ cursed. 2. Like a garden without water, that is neither rained upon, nor watered with the foot, (Deut. xi. 10.) that has no fountains, (Cant. iv. 15.) and consequently, is parched, and all the fruits of it gone to decay. Thus shall they be, that trust in idols, or in an *arm of flesh*, Jer. xvii. 5, 6. But they that trust in God never find him as a wilderness, or as waters that fail, Jer. ii. 31.

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

Now all this is applicable, 1. To the blessed work of reformation, which was wrought in Hezekiah's time, after the abominable corruptions of the reign of Ahaz. Then good men came to be preferred, and the faces of the wicked were filled with shame. 2. To their return out of their captivity in Babylon, which had thoroughly cured them of idolatry. 3. To the gospel-kingdom, and the pouring out of the Spirit, by which the New Testament church should be made a new Jerusalem, a city of righteousness. 4. To the second coming of Christ, when he shall thoroughly purge his floor, his field, shall gather the wheat into his barn, into his garner, and burn the chaff, the tares, with unquenchable fire.

## CHAP. II.

With this chapter begins a new sermon, which is continued in the two following chapters. The subject of this discourse is Judah and Jerusalem, v. 1. In this chapter, the prophet speaks, I. Of the glory of the christians, Jerusalem, the gospel-church in the latter days, in the accession of many to it, (v. 2, 3.) and the great peace it should introduce into the world, (v. 4.) whence he infers the duty of the house of Jacob, v. 5. II. Of the shame of the Jews, Jerusalem, as it then was, and as it would be after its rejecting of the gospel, and being rejected of

God. 1. Their sin was their shame, v. 6. 1. 9. 2. God by his judgments would humble them, and put them to shame, v. 10. 1. 17. They should themselves be ashamed of their confidence in their idols, and in an arm of flesh, v. 18. 1. 22. And now which of these Jerusalems will we be the inhabitants of? That which is full of the knowledge of God, which will be our everlasting honour, or that which is full of horses and chariots, and silver and gold, and such idols, which will, in the end, be our shame.

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

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

This sermon begins with the prophecy relating to the last days, the days of the Messiah, when his kingdom should be set up in the world, at the latter end of the Mosaic economy. In the last days of the earthly Jerusalem, just before the destruction of it, this heavenly Jerusalem should be erected, Heb. xii. 22. Gal. iv. 26. Note, Gospel-times are the last days. For, 1. They were long in coming, were a great time waited for by the Old Testament saints, and came at last. 2. We are not to look for any dispensation of divine grace, but what we have in the gospel, Gal. i. 8, 9. 3. We are to look for the second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of time, as the Old Testament saints did for his first coming; *this is the last time*, 1 John ii. 18.

Now the prophet here foretells,

I. The setting up of the Christian church, and the planting of the Christian religion in the world. Christianity shall then be the mountain of the Lord's house; where that is professed, God will grant his presence, receive his people's homage, and grant instruction and blessing, as he did of old in the temple of Mount Zion. The gospel-church, incorporated by Christ's charter, shall then be the rendezvous of all the spiritual seed of Abraham. Now it is here promised, 1. That Christianity shall be openly preached and professed; it shall be *prepared* (so the margin reads it) in the top of the mountains, in the view and hearing of all. Hence Christ's disciples are compared to a city on a hill, which *cannot*

*be hid*, Matth. v. 14. They had many eyes upon them. Christ himself *spake openly to the world*, John xviii. 20. What the apostles did, was not *done in a corner*, Acts xxvi. 26. It was the lighting of a beacon, the setting up of a standard. Its being every where spoken *against*, supposes that it was every where spoken *of*. 2. That it shall be firmly fixed and rooted; that it shall be established on the top of the everlasting mountains, built upon a rock, so that the *gates of hell shall not prevail against it*, unless they could pluck up mountains by the roots. He that dwells safely, is said to *dwell on high*, *ch.* xxxiii. 16. *The Lord has founded the gospel-Zion*. 3. That it shall not only overcome all opposition, but overtop all competition; it shall be *exalted above the hills*. This *wisdom of God in a mystery* shall outshine all the wisdom of this world, all its philosophy, and all its politics. The spiritual worship which it shall introduce, shall put down the idolatries of the heathen; and all other institutions in religion shall appear mean and despicable, in comparison with this. See Ps. lxxviii. 16. *Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill which God desires to dwell in*.

II. The bringing in of the Gentiles into it; 1. The nations shall be admitted into it, even the uncircumcised, who were forbidden to come into the courts of the temple at Jerusalem; the partition-wall, which kept them out, kept them off, shall be taken down. 2. *All nations shall flow into it*; having liberty of access, they shall improve their liberty, and multitudes shall embrace the Christian faith. They shall flow into it, as streams of water; which denotes the abundance of converts that the gospel should make, and their speed and cheerfulness in coming into the church. They shall not be forced into it, but shall naturally flow into it. *Thy people shall be willing*; all volunteers, Ps. cx. 3. To Christ shall the *gathering of the people be*, Gen. xlix. 10. See *ch.* lx. 4, 5.

III. The mutual assistance and encouragement which this confluence of converts shall give to one another. Their pious affections and resolutions shall be so intermixed, that they shall come in, in one full stream. As when the Jews from all parts of the country went up thrice a year to worship at Jerusalem, they called on their friends in the road, and excited them to go along with them, so shall many of the Gentiles court their relations, friends, and neighbours, to join with them in embracing the Christian religion; (v. 3.) "*Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord*; though it be up hill, and against heart, yet it is the *mountain of the Lord*, who will assist the ascent of our souls toward him." Note, Those that are entering into covenant and communion with God themselves, should bring as many as they can along with them; it becomes Christians to provoke one another to good works, and to further the communion of saints by inviting one another into it: not, "*Do you go up to the mountain of the Lord*, and pray for us, and we will stay at home;" nor, "*We will go, and do you as you will*;" but, "*Come, and let us go*, let us go in concert, that we may strengthen one another's hands, and support one another's reputation;" not, "*We will consider of it, and advise about it, and go hereafter*;" but, "*Come, and let us go forthwith*," Ps. cxxii. 1. Many shall say this; those that have had it said to them, shall say it to others. The gospel-church is here called, not only *the mountain of the Lord*, but *the house of the God of Jacob*; for in it God's covenant with Jacob and his praying seed is kept up, and has its accomplishment; for to us now, as unto them, he never said, *Seek ye me, in vain*, *ch.* xlv. 19.

Now see here, 1. What they promise themselves, in going up to the *mountain of the Lord*,



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

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

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

VI. The great peace which should be the effect of the success of the gospel in the world; (v. 4.) *They shall beat their swords into ploughshares*; their instruments of war shall be converted into implements of husbandry; as, on the contrary, when war is proclaimed, *ploughshares are beaten into swords*, Joel iii. 10. *Nation shall not then lift up sword against nation*, as now they do, *neither shall they learn war any more*, for they shall have no more occasion for it. This does not make all war absolutely unlawful among Christians, nor is it a prophecy that in the days of the Messiah there shall be no wars. The Jews urge this against Christians, as an argument that Jesus is not the Messiah, because this promise is not fulfilled. But, 1. It was in part fulfilled in the peaceableness of the time in which Christ was born, when wars were in a great measure ceased; witness *the taxing*, Luke ii. 1. 2. The design and tendency of the gospel are to make peace, and to slay all enmities. It has in it the most powerful obligations and inducements to peace; so that one might reasonably have expected it should have had this effect, and it would have had it, if it had not been for those lusts of men, from which come wars and fightings. 3. Jews and Gentiles were reconciled, and brought to-

gether, by the gospel, and there were no more such wars between them as had been; for they became *one sheep-fold under one shepherd*, Eph. ii. 15. 4. The gospel of Christ, as far as it prevails, disposes men to be peaceable, softens men's spirits, and sweetens them; and the love of Christ, shed abroad in the heart, constrains men to love one another. 5. The primitive Christians were famous for brotherly love; their very adversaries took notice of it. 6. We have reason to hope that this promise shall yet have a more full accomplishment in the latter times of the Christian church, when the Spirit shall be poured out more plentifully from on high. Then there shall be on earth peace. *Who shall live when God doeth this?* But do it he will in due time, for *he is not a man that he should lie.*

Lastly, Here is a practical inference drawn from all this; (v. 5.) *O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord.* By the house of Jacob is meant either, 1. Israel according to the flesh. Let them be provoked by this to a holy emulation. Rom. xi. 14. "Seeing the Gentiles are thus ready, and resolved for God, thus forward to go up to the house of the Lord, let us stir up ourselves to go too. Let it never be said that the sinners of the Gentiles were better friends to the holy mountain, than the house of Jacob." Thus the zeal of some should provoke many. Or, 2. Spiritual Israel, all that are brought to the God of Jacob. Shall there be such great knowledge in gospel times, (v. 3.) and such great peace? (v. 4.) And shall we share in these privileges? Come, then, and let us live accordingly. Whatever others do, *come, O come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.* (1.) Let us walk circumspectly in the light of this knowledge. Will God teach us his ways? will he show us his glory in the face of Christ? Let us then *walk as the children of the light and of the day*, Eph. v. 8. 1 Thess. v. 8. Rom. xiii. 12. (2.) Let us walk circumspectly in the light of this peace. Shall there be no more war? Let us then go on our way rejoicing, and let this joy terminate in God, and be our strength, Neh. viii. 10. Thus shall we walk in the beams of the Sun of righteousness.

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

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

I. Israel's doom; this is set forth in two words,

the first and last of this paragraph; but they are two dreadful words, and which speak. 1. Their case sad, very sad; (v. 6.) *Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people.* Miserable is the condition of that people whom God has forsaken, and great certainly must the provocation be, if he forsake those that have been his own people. This was the deplorable state of the Jewish church after they had rejected Christ; *Migremus hinc—Let us go hence. Your house is left unto you desolate*, Matth. xxiii. 38. Whenever any sore calamity came upon the Jews, thus far the Lord might be said to forsake them, when he withdrew his help and succour from them, else they had not fallen into the hands of their enemies. But God never leaves any till they first leave him. 2. Their case desperate, wholly desperate; (v. 9.) *Therefore forgive them not.* This prophetic prayer amounts to a threatening, that they should not be forgiven: and so some think it may be read, *And thou wilt not forgive them.* This refers not to particular persons, (many of whom repented, and were pardoned,) but to the body of that nation against whom an irreversible doom was passed, that they should be wholly cut off, and their church quite dismantled, never to be formed into such a body again, nor ever to have their old charter restored to them.

II. Israel's desert of this doom, and the reasons upon which it is grounded; in general, it is sin; that is it, and nothing but that which provokes God to forsake his people. The particular sins he specifies, are such as abounded among them at that time, which he makes mention of for the conviction of those to whom he then preached, rather than that which afterward proved the measure-filling sin, their crucifying of Christ, and persecuting of his followers; for the sins of every age contributed toward the making up of the dreadful account at last. And there was a partial and temporary rejection of them by the captivity in Babylon hastening on, which was a type of their final destruction by the Romans, and which the sins here mentioned brought upon them.

Their sins were such as directly contradicted all God's kind and gracious designs concerning them.

1. God set them apart for himself, as a peculiar people distinguished from, and dignified above, all other people; (Numb. xxiii. 9.) but they were *replenished from the east; they naturalized foreigners, not proselyted*; and encouraged them to settle among them, and mingled with them, Hos. vii. 8. Their country was peopled with Syrians and Chaldeans, Moabites and Ammonites, and other eastern nations, and with them they admitted the fashions and customs of those nations, and *pleased themselves in the children of strangers*, were fond of them, preferred their country before their own, and thought that the more they conformed to them, the more polite and refined they were; thus did they profane their crown and their covenant. Note, Those are in danger of being estranged from God, who please themselves with those who are strangers to him, for we soon learn the ways of those whose company we love.

2. God gave them his oracles, which they might ask counsel of, not only the scriptures, and the seers, but the breast-plate of judgment; but they slighted these, and became soothsayers like the Philistines, introduced their arts of divination, and hearkened to those who, by the stars, or the clouds, or the flight of birds, or the entrails of beasts, or other magic superstitions, pretended to discover things secret, or foretell things to come; the Philistines were noted for diviners, 1 Sam. vi. 2. Note, Those who slight true divinity, are justly given up to lying divinations; and they will certainly be forsaken of

God, who thus forsake him and their own mercies for lying vanities.

3. God encouraged them to put their confidence in him, and assured them that he would be their Wealth and Strength; but, distrusting his power and promise, they made gold their hope, and furnished themselves with horses and chariots, and relied upon them for their safety, v. 7. God had expressly forbidden even their kings to multiply horses to themselves, and *greatly to multiply silver and gold*, because he would have them to depend upon himself only; but they did not think their interest in God made them a match for their neighbours, unless they had as full treasures of silver and gold, and as formidable hosts of chariots and horses, as they had. It is not having silver and gold, horses and chariots, that is a provocation to God, but, (1.) Desiring them insatiably, so that there is no end of the treasures, no end of the chariots, no bounds or limits set to the desire of them. These shall never have enough in God, (who alone is all-sufficient,) that never know when they have enough of this world, which, at the best, is insufficient. (2.) Depending upon them, as if we could not be safe, and easy, and happy, without them, and could not but be so with them.

4. God himself was their God, the sole Object of their worship, and he himself instituted ordinances of worship for them; but they slighted both him and his institutions; (v. 8.) their land was full of idols, every city had its god, (Jer. xi. 13.) and, according to the goodness of their lands, they made goodly images, Hos. x. 1. They that think one God too little, will find two too many, and yet hundreds not sufficient; for they that love idols, will multiply them; so sottish were they, and so wretchedly infatuated, that they *worshipped the work of their own hands*; as if that could be a god to them, which was not only a creature, but *their* creature, and that which their own fancies had devised, and *their own fingers had made*. It was an aggravation of their idolatry, that God had enriched them with silver and gold, and yet of that silver and gold they made idols; so it was, *Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked*, Hos. ii. 8.

5. God had advanced them, and put honour upon them; but they basely diminished and disparaged themselves; (v. 9.) *The mean man boweth down to his idol*; a thing below the meanest that have any spark of reason left them. Sin is a disparagement to the poorest, and those of the lowest rank. It becomes the mean man to bow down to his superiors, but it ill becomes him to *bow down to the stock of a tree*, ch. xlv. 19. Nor is it only the illiterate and poor-spirited that do this, but even the *great man* forgets his grandeur, and humbles himself to worship idols, deifies men no better than himself, and consecrates stones so much baser than himself. Idolaters are said to *debase themselves even to hell*, ch. lvii. 9. What a shame is it, that great men think the service of the true God below them, and will not stoop to it; and yet will humble themselves to bow down to an idol! Some make this a threatening, that the mean men shall be brought down, and the great men humbled, by the judgments of God, when they come with commission.

10. Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. 11. The lofty loo s of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. 12. For the day of the LORD of hosts *shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty*.

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

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

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

I. To startle and awaken secure sinners, who cry peace to themselves, and bid defiance to God and his judgments; (v. 10.) "*Enter into the rock*; God will attack you with such terrible judgments, and strike you with such terrible apprehensions of them, that you shall be forced to *enter into the rock and hide you in the dust, for fear of the Lord*. You shall lose all your courage, and tremble at the shaking of a leaf; your heart shall fail you for fear, (Luke xxi. 26.) and you shall *flee when none pursues*," Prov. xxviii. 1. To the same purport, v. 19. They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, the darkest, and the deepest, places; they shall call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and rather crush them than not cover them, Hos. x. 8. It was so particularly at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, (Luke xxiii. 30.) and of the persecuting pagan powers, Rev. vi. 16. And all, for fear of the Lord and of the glory of his majesty, looking upon him then to be a consuming fire, and themselves as stubble before him, when he arises to shake terribly the earth, to shake the wicked out of it, (Job xxxviii. 13.) and to shake all those earthly props and supports which they have buoyed themselves up with, to shake them from under them. Note, 1. *With God is terrible majesty*, and the glory of it is such as, sooner or later, will oblige us all to flee before him. 2. Those that will not fear God, and flee to him, will be forced

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Beside those things that were for their strength and safety, they were proud, [1.] Of their trade abroad; but the day of the Lord shall be upon all the ships of Tarshish, they shall be broken as Jehoshaphat's were, shall founder at sea, or be shipwrecked in the harbour. Zebulun was a haven of ships, but should now no more rejoice in his going out. When God is bringing ruin upon a people, he sinks all the branches of their revenue. [2.] Of their ornaments at home; but the day of the Lord shall be upon all pleasant pictures, the painting of their ships, (so some understand it,) or the curious pieces of painting they brought home in their ships from other countries, perhaps from Greece, which afterward was famous for painters. Upon *every thing that is beautiful to behold*, so some read it. Perhaps they were the pictures of their relations, and, for that reason, pleasant, or of their gods, which to the idolaters were delectable things; or they admired them for the fineness of their colours or strokes. There is no harm in making pictures, or in adorning our rooms with them, provided they transgress not either the second or the seventh commandment. But to place our pictures among our pleasant things, to be fond of them and proud of them, to spend that upon them that should be laid out in charity, and to set our hearts upon them, as it ill becomes those who have so many substantial things to take pleasure in, so it provokes God to strip us all of such vain ornaments.

III. To make idolaters ashamed of their idols, and of all the affection they have had for them, and the respect they have paid to them; (v. 18.) *The idols he shall utterly abolish*. When the Lord alone shall be exalted, (v. 17.) he will not only pour contempt upon proud men, who, like Pharaoh, exalt themselves against him, but much more upon all pretended deities, who are rivals with him for divine honours; they shall be abolished, utterly abolished; their friends shall desert them, their enemies shall destroy them, so that, one way or other, an utter riddance shall be made of them. See here, I.

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

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

IV. To make those that have trusted in an arm of flesh, ashamed of their confidence; (v. 22.) *"Cease ye from man"*. The providences of God concerning you shall speak this aloud to you, and therefore take warning beforehand, that you may prevent the uneasiness and shame of a disappointment; and consider," 1. How weak man is; *His breath is in his nostrils*, puffed out every moment, soon gone for good and all. Man is a dying creature, and may die quickly; our nostrils, in which our breath is, are of the outward parts of the body; what is there is like one standing at the door, ready to depart, nay, the doors of the nostrils are always open, the breath in them may slip away, ere we are aware, in a moment. Wherein is man then to be accounted of? Alas, no reckoning is to be made of him,

for he is not what he seems to be, what he pretends to be, what we fancy him to be. Man is like to vanity, nay, he is vanity, he is altogether vanity, he is less, he is lighter, than vanity, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. 2. How wise therefore they are that cease from man; it is our duty, it is our interest, to do so. "*Put not your trust in man*, nor make even the greatest and mightiest of men your confidence; cease to do so. Let not your eye be to the power of man, for it is finite and limited, derived and depending; it is not from him that your judgment proceeds: let not him be your fear, let not him be your hope; but look up to the power of God, to which all the powers of men are subject and subordinate; dread his wrath, secure his favour, take him for your Help, and let your *hope be in the Lord your God.*"

### CHAP. III.

The prophet, in this chapter, goes on to foretell the desolations that were coming upon Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, both that by the Babylonians, and that which completed their ruin by the Romans; with some of the grounds of God's controversy with them. God threatens, I. To deprive them of all the supports, both of their life and of their government, v. 1. . 3. II. To leave them to fall into confusion and disorder, v. 4, 5, 12. III. To deny them the blessings of magistracy, v. 6. . 8. IV. To strip the daughters of Zion of their ornaments, v. 17. . 24. V. To lay all waste by the sword of war, v. 25, 26. The sins that provoked God to deal thus with them, were, 1. Their defiance of God, v. 8. 2. Their impudence, v. 9. 3. The abuse of power to oppression and tyranny, v. 13. . 15. The pride of the daughters of Zion, v. 16. In the midst of the chapter, the prophet is directed how to apply himself to particular persons. (1.) To assure good people that it should be well with them, notwithstanding those general calamities, v. 10. (2.) To assure wicked people that, however God might, in judgment, remember mercy, yet it should goill with them, v. 11. O that the nations of the earth, at this day, would hearken to the rebukes and warnings which this chapter gives!

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

The prophet, in the close of the foregoing chapter, had given a necessary caution to all, not to put

confidence in man, or any creature; he had also given a general reason for that caution, taken from the frailty of human life, and the vanity and weakness of human powers: here he gives a particular reason for it—God was now about to ruin all their creature-confidences, so that they should meet with nothing but disappointments in all their expectations from them, v. 1. The stay and the staff shall be taken away; all their supports, of what kind soever, all the things they trusted to, and looked for help and relief from. Their church and kingdom were grown old, and going to decay, and they were (after the manner of aged men, Zech. viii. 4.) leaning on a staff; now God threatens to take away their staff, and then they must fall of course; to take away the stays both of the city and of the country, of Jerusalem and of Judah, which are indeed stays to one another, and if one fail, the other feels from it.

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

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

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

III. Were their ministers of state a support to them—their learned men, their politicians, their clergy, their wits and virtuosos? These also should be taken away; the judges, who were skilled in the laws, and expert in administering justice, and the prophets, whom they used to consult in difficult cases, the prudent, who were celebrated as men of sense and sagacity above others, and were assistants to the judges; the diviners, (so the word is,) those who used unlawful arts, who, though rotten stays, yet were stayed on; but it may be taken, as we hear it, in a good sense; the ancients, elders in age, in

office, the honourable man, the gravity of whose aspect commands reverence, and whose age and experience make him fit to be a counsellor. Trade is one great support to a nation, even manufactures and handicraft trades; and therefore when the old stay is to be broken, the cunning artificer too shall be taken away; and the last is the eloquent orator, the man skilful of speech, who in some cases may do good service, though he be none of the prudent or the ancient, by putting the sense of others in good language; Moses cannot speak well, but Aaron can. God threatens to take these away, 1. To disable them for the service of their country; *making the judges fools, taking away the speech of the trusty, and the understanding of the aged*, Job xii. 17, &c. Every creature is that to us, that God makes it to be; and we cannot be sure that those who have been serviceable to us, shall always be so. 2. To put an end to their days; for princes are *therefore* not to be trusted in, because *their breath goeth forth*, Ps. cxlvi. 3, 4. Note, The removal of useful men by death, in the midst of their usefulness, is a very threatening symptom to any people.

IV. Was their government a support to them? It ought to be so, it is the business of the sovereign to bear up the pillars of the land, Ps. lxxv. 3. But it is here threatened that this stay should fail them. When the mighty men and the prudent are removed, *Children shall be their princes*; children in age, who must be under tutors and governors, who will be clashing with one another, and making a prey of the young king and his kingdom; children in understanding and disposition, childish men, such as are babes in knowledge, no more fit to rule than a child in the cradle, these shall rule over them, with all the folly, fickleness, and frowardness, of a child. And, *wo unto thee, O land, when thy king is such a one!* Eccl. x. 16.

V. Was the union of the subjects among themselves, their good order, and the good understanding and correspondence that they kept with one another, a stay to them? Where this is, a people may do better, though their princes be not such as they should be; but it is here threatened that God would send an evil spirit among them too, (as Judg. ix. 23.) which would make them, 1. Injurious and unneighbourly one towards another; (v. 5.) *The people shall be oppressed every one by his neighbour*; and their princes being children, take no care to restrain the oppressors, or relieve the oppressed; nor is it to any purpose to appeal to them, (which is a temptation to every man to be his own avenger;) and then they bite and devour one another, and will soon be consumed one of another. Then *Homo hominifuturus—Man becomes a wolf to man. Jusquedatum sceleri—Wickedness receives the stamp of law. Nec hospes ab hospite tutus—The guest and the host are in danger from each other.* 2. Insolent and disorderly towards their superiors. It is as ill an omen to a people as can be, when the rising generation among them are generally untractable, rude, and ungovernable, when *the child behaves himself proudly against the ancient*; whereas he should rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, Lev. xix. 32. When young people are conceited and pert, and carry it scornfully toward their superiors, it is not only a reproach to themselves, but of ill consequence to the public; it slackens the reins of government, and weakens the hands that hold them. It is likewise ill with a people when persons of honour cannot support their authority, but are affronted by the base and beggarly; when judges are insulted by the mob, and their powers set at defiance. Those have a great deal to answer for, who do this.

VI. Is it some stay, some support, to hope that, though matters may be now ill managed, yet others

may be raised up, who may manage better? Yet this expectation also shall be frustrated, for the case shall be so desperate, that no man of sense or substance will meddle with it.

1. The government shall go a begging, v. 6. Here, (1.) It is taken for granted that there is no way of redressing all these grievances, and bringing things into order again, but by good magistrates, who shall be invested with power by common consent, and shall exert that power for the good of the community. And it is probable that this was, in many places, the true origin of government; men found it necessary to unite in a subjection to one who was thought fit for such a trust, in order to the welfare and safety of them all; being aware that they must either be ruled or ruined. Here therefore is the original contract; "*Be thou our ruler*, and we will be subject to thee, and *let this ruin be under thy hand*, to be repaired and restored, and then to be preserved and established, and the interests of it advanced, ch. lviii. 12. Take care to protect us by the sword of war from being injured from abroad, and by the sword of justice from being injurious one to another, and we will bear faith and true allegiance to thee." (2.) The case is represented as very deplorable, and things were come to a sad pass; for, [1.] Children being their princes, every man will think himself fit to prescribe who shall be a magistrate, and will be for preferring his own relations; whereas, if the princes were as they should be, it would be left entirely to them to nominate the rulers, as it ought to be. [2.] Men will find themselves under a necessity even of forcing power into the hands of those that are thought to be fit for it; a man shall take hold by violence of one to make him a ruler, perceiving him ready to resist the motion; nay, he shall urge it upon his brother; whereas commonly, men are not willing that their equals should be their superiors; witness the envy of Joseph's brethren. [3.] It will be looked upon as ground sufficient for the preferring of a man to be a ruler, that he has clothing better than his neighbours; a very poor qualification to recommend a man to a place of trust in the government: it was a sign that the country was much impoverished, when it was a rare thing to find a man that had good clothes, or that could afford to buy himself an alderman's gown, or a judge's robe; and that the people were very unthinking, when they had so much respect to a man in gay clothing, with a gold ring, (Jam. ii. 2, 3.) that, for the sake thereof, they would make him their ruler. It had been some sense to have said, "*Thou hast wisdom, integrity, experience; be thou our ruler*;" but it was a jest to say, *Thou hast clothing; be thou our ruler. A poor wise man*, though in vile raiment, delivered a city, Eccl. ix. 15. We may allude to this, to show how desperate the case of fallen man was, when our Lord Jesus was pleased to become our Brother, and, though he was not courted, offered himself to be our Ruler and Saviour, and to take this ruin under his hand.

2. Those who are thus pressed to come into office, will swear themselves off, because, though they are taken to be men of some substance, yet they know themselves unable to bear the charges of the office, and to answer the expectations of those that chose them, v. 7. He shall swear, (shall lift up the hand, the ancient ceremony used in taking an oath,) *I will not be a healer, make not me a ruler.* Note, Rulers must be healers, and good rulers will be so; they must study to unite their subjects, and not widen the differences that are among them; those only are fit for government, that are of a meek, quiet, healing spirit: they must also heal the wounds that are given to any of the interests of their people, by suitable applications. But why will he not be a ruler? Because *in my house is neither bread nor clothing*.



(1.) If he said true, it was a sign that men's estates were sadly ruined, when even those who made the best appearance, really wanted necessities; a common case, and a piteous one; some, who, having lived fashionably, are willing to put the best side outward, are yet, if the truth were known, in great straits, and go with heavy hearts, for want of bread and clothing. (2.) If he did not speak truth, it was a sign that men's consciences were sadly debauched, when, to avoid the expense of an office, they would load themselves with the guilt of perjury, and (which is the greatest madness in the world) would damn their souls to save their money. Matth. xvi. 26. (3.) However it was, it was a sign that the case of the nation was very bad, when nobody was willing to accept a place in the government of it, as despairing to have either credit or profit by it, which are the two things aimed at in men's common ambition of preferment.

5. The reason why God brought things to this sad pass, even among his own people; (which is given either by the prophet, or by him that refused to be a ruler;) it was not for want of good will to his country, but because he saw the case desperate, and past relief, and it would be to no purpose to attempt it; (v. 8.) *Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen*; and they may thank themselves, they have brought their destruction upon their own heads, for *their tongue and their doings are against the Lord*; in word and action they brake the law of God, and therein designed an affront to him; they wilfully intended to offend him, in contempt of his authority, and defiance of his justice: their tongue was against the Lord, for they contradicted his prophets; and their doings were no better, they acted as they talked; it was an aggravation of their sin, that God's eye was upon them, and that his glory was manifested among them; but they provoked him to his face, as if the more they knew of his glory, the greater pride they took in slighting it, and turning it into shame. And this, this is it, for which Jerusalem is ruined. Note, the ruin both of persons and people is owing to their sins. If they did not provoke God, he would *do them no hurt*, Jer. xxv. 6.

9. The show of their countenance doth witness against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not: *Wo unto their soul! For they have rewarded evil unto themselves.* 10. Say ye to the righteous, that *it shall be well with him*; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. 11. *Wo unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him*; for the reward of his hands shall be given him. 12. *As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.* 13. The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people. 14. The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. 15. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord God of hosts.

Here God proceeds in his controversy with his people. Observe,

I. The ground of his controversy; it was for sin

that God contended with them; if they *ver* themselves, let them look a little further, and they will see that they must *thank* themselves; *Wo unto their souls! For they have rewarded evil unto themselves.* Alas for their souls! (so it may be read, in a way of lamentation,) *for they have procured evil to themselves*, v. 9. Note, 1. The condition of sinners is woful and very deplorable. 2. It is the soul that is damaged and endangered by sin. Sinners may prosper in their outward estates, and yet at the same time there may be a wo to their souls. 3. Whatever evil befalls sinners, it is of their own procuring, Jer. ii. 19.

That which is here charged upon them, is,

(1.) That the shame which should restrain them from their sins, was quite thrown off, and they were grown impudent, v. 9. This hardens men against repentance, and ripens them for ruin, as much as any thing; *The show of their countenance doth witness against them*, that their minds are vain, and lewd, and malicious; their eyes speak it plain, that they cannot cease from sin, 2 Pet. ii. 14. One may look them in the face, and guess at the desperate wickedness that there is in their hearts; *They declare their sin as Sodom*; so impetuous, so imperious, are their lusts, and so impatient of the least check; and so perfectly are all the remaining sparks of virtue extinguished in them. The Sodomites declared their sin, not only by the exceeding greatness of it, (Gen. xiii. 13.) so that it cried to heaven, (Gen. xviii. 20.) but by their shameless owning of that which was most shameful; (Gen. xix. 5.) and thus Judah and Jerusalem did: they were so far from hiding it, that they gloried in it, in the bold attempt they made upon virtue, and the victory they gained over their own convictions: they had a whore's forehead, (Jer. iii. 3.) and could not blush, (Jer. vi. 15.) Note, Those that are grown impudent in sin, are ripe for ruin; they that are past shame, (we say,) are past grace, and then past hope.

(2.) That their guides, who should direct them in the right way, put them out of the way, v. 12. "They who lead, (the princes, priests, and prophets,) mislead thee, they cause thee to err." Either they preached to them that which was false and corrupt, or if they preached that which was true and good, they contradicted it by their practices; and the people would sooner follow a bad example than a good exhortation: thus *they destroyed the way of their paths*, pulling down with one hand what they built up with the other. *Qui te beatificanti—They that call thee blessed, cause thee to err*; so some read it. Their priests applauded them, as if nothing was amiss among them; cried, *Peace, peace*, to them, as if they were in no danger; and thus they caused them to go on in their errors.

(3.) That their judges who should have patronized and protected the oppressed, were themselves the greatest oppressors, v. 14, 15. The elders of the people, and the princes, who had learning, and could not but know better things, who had great estates, and were not under the temptation of necessity to encroach upon those about them, and who were men of honour, and should scorn to do a base thing, yet *they have eaten up the vineyard*. God's vineyard, which they were appointed to be the dressers and keepers of, they burnt; so the word signifies; they did as ill by it as its worst enemies could do, Ps. lxxx. 16. Or the vineyards of the poor; they wrested them out of their possession, as Jezebel did Naboth's; or devoured the fruits of them, fed their lusts with that which should have been the necessary food of indigent families; the spoil of the poor was hoarded up in their houses; when God came to search for stolen goods, there he found it, and it was a witness against them. I.

was to be had, and they might have made restitution, but would not. God reasons with those great men; (v. 15.) "*What mean you, that ye beat my people in pieces? What cause have you for it? What good does it do you?*" Or, "*What hurt have they done you? Do you think you have power given you for such a purpose as this?*" Note, There is nothing more unaccountable, and yet nothing which must more certainly be accounted for, than the injuries and abuses that are done to God's people by their persecutors and oppressors; "*Ye grind the face of the poor; ye put them into as much pain and terror as if they were ground in a mill, and as certainly reduce them to dust by one act of oppression after another. Or, "Their faces are bruised and crushed with the blows you have given them; you have not only ruined their estates, but given them personal abuses."* Our Lord Jesus was smitten on the face, Matt. xxvi. 67.

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

III. The distinction that shall be made between particular persons, in the prosecution of this controversy; (v. 10, 11.) *Say to the righteous, It shall be well with thee. Wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him.* He had said, (v. 9.) *they have rewarded evil to themselves*; and to prove that, he here shows that God will render to every man according to his works. Had they been righteous, it had been well with them; but if it be ill with them, it is because they are wicked, and will be so. Thus God stated the matter to Cain, to convince him that he had no reason to be angry, Gen. iv. 7. Or it may be taken thus; God is threatening national judgments, which will ruin the public interests. Now, 1. Some good people might fear that they should be involved in that ruin, and therefore God bids the prophets comfort them against those fears; "*Whatever becomes of the unrighteous nation, say ye to the righteous man, that ye shall not be lost in the crowd of sinners, the Judge of all the earth will not slay the righteous with the wicked;*" (Gen. xviii. 25.) no, assure him in God's name, that *it shall be well with him*. The property of the trouble shall be altered to him, and he shall be *hid in the day of the Lord's anger*. He shall have divine supports and comforts, which shall abound as afflictions abound, and so it shall be well with him." When the whole *stay of bread is taken away*, yet in the day of famine they shall be satisfied, they shall eat the fruit of their doings; they shall have the testimony of their consciences for them, that they kept themselves pure from the common iniquity, and therefore the common calamity is not the same thing to them that it is to others; they brought no

*fuel to the flame*, and therefore are not themselves fuel for it. 2. Some wicked people might hope that they should escape that ruin, and therefore God bids the prophets shake their vain hopes; "*Wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him;*" (v. 11.) to him the judgments shall have a sting, and there shall be *wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery*." There is a wo to wicked people, and though they may think to shelter themselves from public judgment, yet it shall be ill with them; it will grow worse and worse with them if they repent not, and the worst of all will be at last; for *the reward of his hands shall be done to him*, in the day when every man shall receive according to the things done in the body.

16. Moreover, the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walked with stretched-forth necks and wanton eyes, walking, and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: 17. Therefore the LORD will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts. 18. In that day the LORD will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, 19. The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, 20. The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, 21. The rings, and nose-jewels, 22. The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping-pins, 23. The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the vails. 24. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell, there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle, a rent; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and instead of a stomacher, a girding of sackcloth! and burning instead of beauty. 25. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. 26. And her gates shall lament and mourn: and she, being desolate, shall sit upon the ground.

The prophet's business was to show all sorts of people what they had contributed to the national guilt, and what share they must expect in the national judgments that were coming; here he reproves and warns the daughters of Zion, tells the ladies of their faults; and Moses, in the law, having denounced God's wrath against *the tender and delicate woman*, (the prophets being a comment upon the law, Deut. xxviii. 56.) he here tells them how they should smart by the calamities that were coming upon them. Observe,

1. The sin charged upon the daughters of Zion, v. 16. The prophet expressly vouches God's authority for what he said, lest it should be thought it was unbecoming him to take notice of such things, and should be ill-resented by the ladies; *The Lord saith it*. Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, let them know that God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the folly and vanity of proud women, and his law takes cognizance

even of their dress. Two things they here stand indicted for, lightness and wantonness; directly contrary to that *modesty, shamefacedness, and sobriety, with which women ought to adorn themselves*, 1. Tim. ii. 9. They discovered the disposition of their mind by their gait and gesture, and the lightness of their carriage. They are haughty, for they *walked with stretched-forth necks*, that they may seem tall, or, as thinking nobody good enough to speak to them, or, to receive a look or a smile; their eyes are wanton; *receiving*, so the word is; with their amorous glances they draw men into their snares; they affect a formal starched way of going, that people may look at them, and admire them, and know they have been at the dancing-school, and have learned the minuet-step; they go *mincing*, or nicely tripping, not willing to set so much as the sole of their foot to the ground, for tenderness and delicacy; they make a *tinkling with their feet*, having, as some think, chains, or little bells, upon their shoes, that made a noise; they go *as if they were fettered*; so some read it; like a horse trammelled, that he may learn to pace. Thus Agag came delicately, 1 Sam. xv. 32. Such a nice affected mien is not only a force upon that which is natural, and ridiculous before men, men of sense; but as it is an evidence of a vain mind, it is offensive to God. And two things aggravated it here, (1.) That these were the daughters of Zion the holy mountain, who should have behaved with the gravity that becomes women professing godliness. (2.) That it should seem, by the connexion, they were the wives and daughters of the princes who spoiled and oppressed the poor, (v. 14, 15.) that they might maintain this pride and luxury of their families.

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

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

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

(3.) They were extremely fond and proud of their ornaments; but God will strip them of those ornaments, when their houses should be plundered, their treasures rifled, and they themselves led into captivity. The prophet here specifies many of the ornaments which they used, as particularly as if he had been the keeper of their wardrobe, or had attended them in their dressing-room. It is not at all material to inquire what sort of ornaments these respectively were, and whether the translations rightly express the original words; perhaps a hundred years hence the names of some of the ornaments that are now in use in our land will be as little understood as some of those here are. Fashions alter, and so do the names of them; and yet the mention of them is not in vain, but is designed to expose the folly of the daughters of Zion; for, (1.) Many of these things, we may suppose, were very odd and ridiculous, and if they had not been in fashion, would have been hooted at. They were fitter to be toys for children to play with, than ornaments for grown people to go to mount Zion in. (2.) Those things that were decent and convenient, as the linen, hoods, and the veils, needed not to

have been provided in such abundance and variety. It is necessary to have apparel, and that all should have it according to their rank; but what occasion was there for so many changeable suits of apparel, (v. 22.) that they might not be seen two days together in the same suit? "They must have (as the homily against excess of apparel speaks) one gown for the day, another for the night; one long, another short; one for the working-day, another for the holy-day; another of this colour, another of that colour; one of cloth, another of silk or damask; one dress afore dinner, another after; one of the Spanish fashion, another Turkey, and never content with sufficient." Which, as it is an evidence of pride and vain curiosity, so must needs spend a great deal, in gratifying a base lust, that ought to be laid out in works of piety and charity; and it is well if poor tenants be not racked, or poor creditors defrauded, to support it. (3.) The enumeration of these things intimates what care they were in about them, how much their hearts were upon them, what an exact account they kept of them, how nice and critical they were about them, how insatiable their desire was of them, and how much of their comfort was bound up in them. A maid could forget none of these ornaments, though they were ever so many, (Jer. ii. 32.) but would report them as readily, and talk of them with as much pleasure, as if they had been things of the greatest moment. The prophet does not speak of these things as in themselves sinful; they may lawfully be had and used, but as things which they were proud of, and should therefore be deprived of.

4. They were very nice and curious about their clothes; but God would make those bodies of theirs which they were at such expense to beautify and make easy, a reproach and burthen to them; (v. 24.) *Instead of sweet smell* (those tablets, or boxes of perfume, *houses of the soul or breath*, as they are called, v. 20. margin) *there shall be stink*, garments grown filthy, with being long worn, or from some loathsome disease, or plasters for the cure of it; instead of a rich embroidered girdle, used to make the clothes sit tight, there shall be a rent, a rending of the clothes for grief, or old rotten clothes rent into rags; instead of well-set hair, curiously plaited and powdered, there shall be baldness, the hair being plucked off or shaven, as was usual in times of great affliction, (ch. xv. 2. Jer. xvi. 6.) or in great servitude, Ezek. xxix. 18. *Instead of a stomacher, or a scarf, or sash, a girding of sackcloth*, in token of deep humiliation; and *burning instead of beauty*. Those that had a good complexion, and were proud of it, when they are carried into captivity, shall be tanned and sun-burnt; and it is observed, that the best faces are soonest injured by the weather. From all this let us learn, (1.) Not to be nice and curious about our apparel, nor to affect that which is gay and costly, or to be proud of it. (2.) Not to be secure in the enjoyment of any of the delights of sense, because we know not how soon we may be stripped of them, nor what straits we may be reduced to.

5. They designed by these ornaments to charm the gentlemen, and win their affections, (Prov. vii. 16, 17.) but there shall be none to be charmed by them; (v. 25.) *Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war*. The fire shall consume them, and then the maidens shall not be given in marriage; as it is, Ps. lxxviii. 63. When the sword comes with commission, the mighty commonly fall first by it, because they are most forward to venture. And when Zion's guards are cut off, no marvel that Zion's gates *lament and mourn*, (v. 26.) the enemies having made themselves masters of them, and the city itself, being desolate, being emptied or swept, shall *sit upon the ground*, like a disconsolate

widow. If sin be harboured within the walls, lamentation and mourning are near her gates.

#### CHAP. IV.

In this chapter, we have, I. A threatening of the paucity and scarceness of men, (v. 1.) which might fitly enough have been added to the close of the foregoing chapter, to which it has a plain reference. II. A promise of the restoration of Jerusalem's peace and purity, righteousness and safety, in the days of the Messiah, v. 2.-6. Thus, in wrath, mercy is remembered, and gospel grace is a sovereign relief, in reference to the terrors of the law, and the desolations made by sin.

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

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

1. That, though Providence has so wisely ordered that, *communibus annis—on an average of years*, there is nearly an equal number of males and females born into the world, yet through the devastations made by war, there should scarcely be one man in seven left alive. As there are deaths attending the bringing forth of children, which are peculiar to the woman, who was first in the transgression, so, to balance that, there are deaths peculiar to men; those by the sword in the high places of the field, which perhaps devour more than child-bed does. Here it is foretold, that such multitudes of men should be cut off, that there should be *seven women to one man*.

2. That, by reason of the scarcity of men, though marriage should be kept up, for the raising of recruits, and the preserving of the race of mankind upon earth, yet the usual method of it should be quite altered; that whereas men ordinarily, make their court to the women, the women should now take hold of the men, foolishly fearing (as Lot's daughters did, when they saw the ruin of Sodom, and perhaps thought it reached further than it did) that in a little time there would be none left; (*Gen. xix. 31.*) and that, whereas women naturally hate to come in sharers with others, seven should now, by consent, become the wives of one man; and that, whereas, by the law, the husband was obliged to provide food and raiment for his wife, (*Exod. xxi. 10.*) which with many would be the most powerful argument against multiplying wives, these women will be bound to find themselves, they will *eat bread of their own earning*, and wear *apparel of their own workings*; and the man they court shall be at no expense with them, only they desire to be called his wives, to take away the reproach of a single life. They are willing to be wives upon any terms, though ever so unreasonable; and perhaps the rather, because in these troublesome times it would be a kindness to them to have a husband for their protector. St. Paul, on the contrary, in the time of distress, thinks the single state preferable, *1 Cor. vii. 26.* It were well if this were not introduced here partly as a reflection upon the daughters of Zion, that, notwithstanding the humbling providences they were under, (*ch. iii. 18.*) they remained unhumbled, and, instead of repenting of their pride and vanity, when God was contending with them for it, all their care was to get them husbands—that modesty, which is the greatest beauty of the fair sex, was forgotten, and with them the reproach of vice was nothing to the reproach of virginity; a sad symptom of the irrecoverable desolations of virtue.

2. In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.

3. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: 4. When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. 5. And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. 6. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

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

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

I. That God will raise up a righteous Branch, which should produce fruits of righteousness; (*v. 2.*) In that day, that same day, at that very time, when Jerusalem shall be destroyed, and the Jewish nation extirpated and dispersed, the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up; and then shall be the reviving of the church, when every one shall fear the utter ruin of it.

1. Christ himself shall be exalted; he is the Branch of the Lord, the Man, the Branch: it is one of his prophetic names, *my Servant, the Branch*, (*Zech. iii. 8.—vi. 12.*) the Branch of righteousness, (*Jer. xxiii. 5.—xxxiii. 15.*) a Branch out of the stem of Jesse; (*ch. xi. 1.*) and that, as some think, is alluded to when he is called a Nazarene, *Matth. ii. 23.* Here he is called the Branch of the Lord, because planted by his power, and flourishing to his praise. The ancient Chaldee Paraphrase here reads it, *The Christ, or Messiah of the Lord.* He shall be the Beauty, and Glory, and Joy. (1.) He shall himself be advanced to the joy set before him, and the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. He that was a Reproach of men, and whose visage was marred more than any man's, is now, in the upper world, beautiful and glorious, as the sun in his strength, admired and adored by angels. (2.) He shall be beautiful and glorious in the esteem of all believers, shall gain an interest in the world, and a name among men, above every name. To them that believe he is precious, he is an Honour, (*1 Pet. ii. 7.*) the *Fairest of ten thousand*, (*Cant. v. 10.*) and altogether glorious. Let us rejoice that he is so, and let him be so to us.

2. His gospel shall be embraced. The gospel is the fruit of the Branch of the Lord; all the graces and comforts of the gospel spring from Christ. But it is called the *fruit of the earth*, because it sprang up in this world, and was calculated for the present state. And Christ compares himself to a *corn of wheat, that falls into the ground, and dies, and so brings forth much fruit*, John xii. 24. The success of the gospel is represented by the *earth's yielding her increase*, (Ps. lxxvii. 6.) and the planting of the Christian church is God's *sowing it to himself in the earth*, Hos. ii. 23. We may understand it of both the persons, and the things, that are the products of the gospel; they shall be excellent and comely, shall appear very agreeable, and be very acceptable to them that are escaped of Israel, of that remnant of the Jews, which was saved from perishing with the rest in unbelief, Rom. xi. 5. Note, If Christ be precious to us, his gospel will be so, and all its truths and promises; his church will be so, and all that belong to it. These are the good fruit of the earth, in comparison with which, all other things are but weeds. It will be a good evidence to us, that we are of the chosen remnant, distinguished from the rest that are called *Israel*, and marked for salvation, if we are brought to see a transcendent beauty in Christ and holiness, and the saints, the excellent ones of the earth. As a type of this blessed day, Jerusalem, after Sennacherib's invasion, and after the captivity in Babylon, should again flourish as a branch, and be blessed with the fruits of the earth: compare *ch. xxxvii. 31, 32. The remnant shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward*. And if by the fruit of the earth here we understand the good things of this life, we may observe, that those have peculiar sweetness in them to the chosen remnant, who, having a covenant-right to them, have the most comfortable use of them. If the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious in our eyes, even the fruit of the earth also will be excellent and comely, because then we may take it as the fruit of the promise, Ps. xxxvii. 16. 1 Tim. iv. 8.

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

III. That God will reform his church, and will

rectify and amend whatever is amiss in it, *v. 4. Then the remnant shall be called holy, when the Lord shall have washed away their filth*, washed it from among them by cutting off the wicked persons, washed it from within them by purging out the wicked thing. They shall not be called so, till they are in some measure made so. Gospel-times are times of reformation, (Heb. ix. 10.) typified by the reformation in the days of Hezekiah, and that after the captivity, to which this promise refers. Observe, 1. The places and persons to be reformed. Jerusalem, though the holy city, needed reformation: and, being the royal city, the reformation of that would have a good influence upon the whole kingdom. The daughters of Zion also must be reformed, the women in a particular manner, whom he had reproved; *ch. iii. 16. When they were decked in their ornaments, they thought themselves wondrous clean; but, being proud of them, the prophet calls them their filth*, for no sin is more abominable to God than pride: or by the daughters of Zion may be meant the country, towns, and villages, which were related to Jerusalem, as the mother-city, and which needed reformation. 2. The reformation itself; the filth shall be washed away, for wickedness is filthiness, particularly bloodshed, for which Jerusalem was infamous, (2 Kings xxi. 16.) and which defiles the land more than any other sin. Note, The reforming of a city is the cleansing of it; when vicious customs and fashions are suppressed, and the open practice of wickedness is restrained, the place is made clean and sweet, which before was a dunghill; and this is not only for its credit and reputation among strangers, but for the comfort and health of the inhabitants themselves. 3. The Author of the reformation; *The Lord shall do it*: reformation-work is God's work; if any thing be done to purpose in it, it is his doing. But how? By the judgment of his providence the sinners were destroyed and consumed; but it is by the Spirit of his grace that they are reformed and converted. This is work that is done, not by might, or by power, but by the *Spirit of the Lord of hosts*, (Zech. iv. 6.) working both upon the sinners themselves that are to be reformed, and upon magistrates, ministers, and others that are to be employed as instruments of reformation. The Spirit herein acts, (1.) As a Spirit of judgment, enlightening the mind, convincing the conscience, as a Spirit of wisdom, guiding us to deal prudently, (Isa. lii. 13.) as a discerning, distinguishing Spirit, separating between the precious and the vile. (2.) As a Spirit of burning, quickening and invigorating the affections, and making men zealously affected in a good work. The Spirit works as fire, Matth. iii. 11. An ardent love to Christ and souls, and a flaming zeal against sin, will carry men on with resolution in their endeavours *to turn away ungodliness from Jacob*. See Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16.

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

1. Their tabernacles shall be defended, *v. 5. (1.) Their dwelling-places; the tabernacles of their rest, their own houses, where they worship God, alone, and with their families. That blessing which is upon the habitation of the just, shall be a protection to it*, Prov. iii. 33. In the *tabernacles of the righteous* shall the *voice of rejoicing and salvation* be, Ps. cxviii. 15. Note, God takes particular cognizance and care of the dwelling-places of his people, of every one of them, the poorest cottage as well as the stateliest palace. When iniquity is *far from the tabernacle*, the Almighty shall be its

Defence, Job xxii. 23, 25. (2.) Their assemblies or tabernacles of meeting for religious worship. No mention is made of the temple, for the promise points at a time when not one stone of that shall be left upon another; but all the congregations of Christians, though but two or three meet together in Christ's name, shall be taken under the special protection of Heaven; they shall no more be scattered, no more disturbed, nor shall *any weapon formed against them prosper*. Note, We ought to reckon it a great mercy, if we have liberty to worship God in public, free from the alarms of the sword of war or persecution.

Now this writ of protection is drawn up, [1.] In a similitude taken from the safety of the camp of Israel, when they marched through the wilderness. God will give to the Christian church as real proofs, though not so sensible of his care of them, as he gave to them then. The Lord will again *create a cloud and smoke by day*, to screen them from the scorching heat of the sun, and the *shining of a flaming fire by night*, to enlighten and warm the air, which, in the night, is cold and dark. See Exod. xiii. 21. Neh. ix. 19. This pillar of cloud and fire interposed between the Israelites and the Egyptians, Exod. xiv. 20. Note, Though miracles are ceased, yet God is the same to the New Testament church, that he was to Israel of old; the very same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. [2.] In a similitude taken from the outside cover of rams' skins and badgers' skins, that was upon the curtains of the tabernacle, as if every dwelling-place of mount Zion and every assembly were as dear to God as that tabernacle was: *Upon all the glory shall be a defence*, to save it from wind and weather. Note, The church on earth has its glory; gospel-truths and ordinances, the scriptures and the ministry, are the church's glory; and upon all this glory there is a defence, and ever shall be, for the *gates of hell shall not prevail against the church*. If God himself be the Glory in the midst of it, he will himself be a Wall of fire round about it, impenetrable, and impregnable. Grace in the soul is the glory of it, and those that have it, are kept by the power of God as in a strong hold, 1 Pet. i. 5.

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

## CHAP. V.

In this chapter, the prophet, in God's name, shows the people of God their transgressions, even the house of Jacob their sins, and the judgments which were likely to be brought upon them for their sins: I. By a parable, under the similitude of an unfruitful vineyard, representing the great favours God had bestowed upon them, and their disappointing of his expectations from them, and the ruin they had thereby deserved, v. 1. . 7. II. By an enumeration of the sins that did abound among them, with a threatening of punishments that should answer to the sins: 1. Covetousness, and greediness of worldly wealth, which shall be punished with famine, v. 8. . 10. 2. Rioting, revelling, and drunkenness, (v. 11, 12, 22.) which shall be punished with captivity and all the miseries that attend it, v. 13. . 17. 3. Presumption in sin,

and defying the justice of God, v. 18, 19. 4. Confounding the distinctions between virtue and vice, and so undermining the principles of religion, v. 20. 5. Self-conceit, v. 21. 6. Perverting justice; for which, and the other instances of reigning wickedness among them, a great and general desolation is threatened, which should lay all waste, (v. 24, 25.) and which should be effected by a foreign invasion, (v. 26. . 30.) referring perhaps to the havoc made not long after by Sennacherib's army.

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

See what variety of methods the great God takes to awaken sinners to repentance, by convincing them of sin, and showing them their misery and danger, by reason of it: to this purpose he speaks sometimes in plain terms, and sometimes in parables, sometimes in prose, sometimes in verse, as here: "We have tried to reason with you, (ch. i. 18.) now let us put your case into a poem, inscribed to the honour of my Well-beloved." God the Father dictates it to the honour of Christ his well-beloved Son, whom he has constituted Lord of the vineyard. The prophet sings it to the honour of Christ too, for he is his Well-beloved. The Old Testament prophets were friends of the Bridegroom: Christ is God's beloved Son, and our beloved Saviour: whatever is said or sung of the church, must be intended to his praise, even that which (like this) tends to our shame. This parable is put into a song, that it might be the more moving and affecting, might be the more easily learned, and exactly remembered, and the better transmitted to posterity; and it is an exposition of the song of Moses, (Deut. xxxii.) showing, that what he then foretold, was now fulfilled. Jerem says, Christ, the Well-beloved, did, in effect, sing this mournful song, when he beheld Jerusalem, and *swept over it*, (Luke xix. 41.) and had reference to it in the parable of the vineyard; (Matth. xxi. 33.) only here the fault was in the vines, there in the husbandmen. Here is,

1. The great things which God had done for the Jewish church and nation: when all the rest of the



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

II. The disappointment of his just expectations from them; *He looked that it should bring forth grapes*, and a great deal of reason he had for that expectation. Note, God expects vineyard-fruit from those that enjoy vineyard-privileges; not leaves only, as *Mark xi. 13*. A bare profession, though ever so green, will not serve: there must be more than buds and blossoms; good purposes and good beginnings are good things, but not enough, there must be fruit; a good heart and a good life; vineyard-fruit; thoughts and affections, words and actions, agreeable to the Spirit, which is the fatness of the vineyard, (*Gal. v. 22, 23*.) *answerable to the ordinances*, which are the dressings of the vineyard, and acceptable to God, the Lord of the vineyard, and fruit according to the season. Such fruit as this God expects from us, grapes, the fruit of the vine, with which they honour God and man; (*Judg. ix. 13*.) and his expectations are neither high nor hard, but righteous and very reasonable. Yet see how his expectations are frustrated: it brought forth wild grapes; not only no fruit at all, but bad fruit, worse than none; grapes of Sodom, *Deut. xxxii. 32*. 1. Wild grapes are the fruits of the corrupt nature; fruit according to the crab-stock, not according to the engrafted branch; from the root of bitterness, *Heb. xii. 15*. Where grace does not work, corruption will. 2. Wild grapes are hypocritical performances in religion, that look like grapes, but are sour or bitter; and are so far from being pleasing to God, that they are provoking, as theirs, *ch. i. 11*. Counterfeit graces are wild grapes.

III. An appeal to themselves, whether, upon the whole, God must not be justified, and they condemned, *v. iii. 4*. And now the case is plainly stated, *O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard*. This implies that God was blamed about it; there was a controversy between them and him; but the equity was so plain on his side, that he could venture to put the decision of the contro-

versy to their own consciences; "Let any inhabitant of Jerusalem, any man of Judah, that has but the use of his reason, and a common sense of equity and justice, speak his mind impartially in this matter." Here is a challenge to any man to show,

1. Any instance wherein God had been wanting to them; *What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?* He speaks of the external means of fruitfulness, and such as might be expected from the dresser of a vineyard, from whom it is not required that he should change the nature of the vine. *What ought to have been done more?* (so it may be read.) They had every thing requisite for instruction and direction in their duty, for the quickening of them to it, and putting of them in mind of it: no inducements were wanting to persuade them to it, but all arguments were used, proper to work either upon hope or fear; and they had all the opportunities they could desire for the performance of their duty, the new-moons, and the sabbaths, and solemn feasts; they had the scriptures, the lively oracles, a standing ministry in the priests and Levites, beside what was extraordinary in the prophets. No nation had statutes and judgments so righteous.

2. Nor could any tolerable excuse be offered for their walking thus contrary to God; "Wherefore, what reason can be given why it should bring forth wild grapes, when I looked for grapes?" Note, The wickedness of those that profess religion, and enjoy the means of grace, is the most unreasonable, unaccountable thing in the world, and the whole blame of it must lie upon the sinners themselves; If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it, and shalt not have a word to say for thyself in the judgment of the great day. God will prove his own ways equal, and the sinner's ways unequal.

IV. Their doom read, and a righteous sentence passed upon them for their bad conduct toward God; (*v. 5, 6*.) "And now go to; since nothing can be offered in excuse of the crime, or arrest of the judgment, I will tell you what I am now determined to do to my vineyard; I will be vexed and troubled with it no more: since it *will* be good for nothing, it *shall* be good for nothing: in short, it shall cease to be a vineyard, and be turned into a wilderness; the church of the Jews shall be unchurched, their charter shall be taken away, and they shall become *lo-ammi—not my people*." 1. "They shall no longer be distinguished as a peculiar people, but be laid in common; *I will take away the hedge thereof*, and then it will soon be eaten up, and become as bare as other ground." They mingled themselves with the nations, and therefore were justly scattered among them. They shall no longer be protected as God's people, but left exposed. God will not only suffer the wall to go to decay, but he will break it down, will remove all their defences from them; and then they become an easy prey to their enemies, who had long waited for an opportunity to do them a mischief, and will now tread them down, and trample upon them. 3. They shall no longer have the face of a vineyard, the form and shape of a church and commonwealth, but shall be levelled and laid waste. This was fulfilled when *Jerusalem for their sakes was ploughed as a field*, *Mic. iii. 12*. 4. No more pains shall be taken with them by magistrates or ministers, the dressers and keepers of their vineyard; it shall not be pruned or digged, but every thing shall run wild, and nothing shall come up but briars and thorns, the products of sin and the curse, *Gen. iii. 18*. When errors and corruptions, vice and immorality, go without check or control, no testimony borne against them, no rebuke given them, or restraint put upon them, the vineyard is unpruned, is not dressed or ridged; and then it will soon be like the vineyard of the man void of

understanding, all grown over with thorns. 5. That which completes its wo, is, that the dews of heaven shall be withheld; he that has the key of the clouds, will command them that they rain no rain upon it; and that alone is sufficient to turn it into a desert. Note, God, in a way of righteous judgment, denies his grace to those that have long received it in vain. The sum of all is, that they who would not bring forth good fruit, should bring forth none. The curse of barrenness is the punishment of the sin of barrenness; as Mark xi. 14. This had its accomplishment, in part, in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, its full accomplishment in the final rejection of the Jews, and has its frequent accomplishment in the departure of God's Spirit from those persons who have long resisted him, and striven against him, and the removal of his gospel from those places that have been long a reproach to it, while it has been an honour to them. It is no loss to God to lay his vineyard waste; for he can, when he pleases, turn a wilderness into a fruitful field; and when he does thus dismantle a vineyard, it is but as he did by the garden of Eden, which, when man had by sin forfeited his place in, was soon levelled with common soil.

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

8. Wo unto them that join house to house, *that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!* 9. In mine ears, *said the LORD of hosts, Of a truth, many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant.* 10. Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of a homer shall yield an ephah. 11. Wo unto them that rise up early in the morning, *that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!* 12. And the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe,

and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands. 13. Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because *they have* no knowledge; and their honourable men *are* famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. 14. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it. 15. And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled. 16. But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God, that is holy, shall be sanctified in righteousness. 17. Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.

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

I. Here is a wo to those who set their hearts upon the wealth of the world, and place their happiness in that, and increase it to themselves by indirect and unlawful means, (v. 8.) who *join house to house, and lay field to field, till there be no place, no room for any body to live by them; could they succeed, they would be placed alone in the midst of the earth, would monopolize possessions and preferments, and engross all profits and employments to themselves.* Not that it is a sin for those who have a house and a field, if they have wherewithal to purchase another; but their fault is, 1. That they are inordinate in their desires to enrich themselves, and make it their whole care and business to raise an estate; as if they had nothing to mind, nothing to seek, nothing to do, in this world, but that. They never know when they have enough, but the more they have, the more they would have; and, like the *daughters of the horseleech*, they cry, *Give, give*; they cannot enjoy what they have, nor do good with it, being so intent on contriving and studying to make it more. They must have variety of houses, a winter-house, and a summer-house; and if another man's house, or field, lie convenient to theirs, as Naboth's vineyard to Ahab's, they must have that too, or they cannot be easy. Their fault is, 2. That they are herein careless of others, nay, and injurious to them; they would live so as to let nobody live but themselves; so that their insatiable covetings be gratified, they matter not what becomes of all about them: what encroachments they make upon their neighbour's rights, what hardships they put upon those that they have power over, or advantage against, or what base and wicked arts they use to heap up treasure to themselves. They would swell so big as to fill all space, and yet are still unsatisfied, Eccl. v. 10. As Alexander, who, when he feared he had conquered the world, wept because he had not another world to conquer: *Deficiente terra, non*

*impulerat avaritia—If the whole earth were monopolized, avarice would thirst for more. What, will you be placed alone in the midst of the earth? (so some read it.) Will you be so foolish as to desire it, when we have so much need of the service of others, and so much comfort in their society? Will you be so foolish as to expect that the earth should be forsaken for us, (Job xviii. 4.) when it is by multitudes that the earth is to be replenished? An prophet vos solos tanta terra creata est?—Was the wide world created merely for you? Lyra.*

Now that which is threatened, as the punishment of this sin, is, that neither the houses nor the fields they were thus greedy of, should turn to any account, v. 9, 10. God whispered it to the prophet in his ear, as he speaks in a like case; (*ch. xxii. 14.*) *It was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts; (as God told Samuel a thing in his ear, 1 Sam. ix. 15.)* he thought he heard it still sounding in his ears; but he proclaims it as he ought to do, *upon the house-tops, Matth. x. 27.* (1.) That the houses they were so fond of, should be untenanted, should stand long empty, and so should yield them no rent, and go out of repair: *Many houses shall be desolate*, the people that should dwell in them being cut off by sword, famine, or pestilence, or carried into captivity; or, trade being dead, and poverty coming upon the country like an armed man, those that had been house-keepers, were forced to become lodgers, or shift for themselves elsewhere. Even great and fair houses, that would invite tenants, and (there being a scarcity of tenants) might be taken at low rates, shall stand empty without inhabitants. God created not the earth in vain: he *formed it to be inhabited, ch. xlv. 18.* But men's projects are often frustrated, and what they frame, answers not the intention. We have a saying, That fools build houses for wise men to live in; but sometimes it proves for no man to live in. God has many ways to empty the most populous cities. (2.) That the fields they were so fond of should be unfruitful; (*v. 10.*) *Ten acres of vineyard shall yield only such a quantity of grapes as will make but one bath of wine*, which was about eight gallons; *and the seed of an homer, a bushel's sowing of ground, shall yield but an ephah*, which was the tenth part of an homer; so that, through the barrenness of the ground, or the unseasonableness of the weather, they should not have more than a tenth part of their seed again. Note, Those that set their hearts upon the world, will justly be disappointed in their expectations from it.

II. Here is a wo to those that doat upon the pleasures and delights of sense, v. 11, 12. Sensuality ruins men as certainly as worldliness and oppression. As Christ pronounced a wo against those that are rich, so also against those that laugh now, and are full, (*Luke vi. 24, 25.*) and fare sumptuously, *Luke xvi. 19.*

Observe, 1. Who the sinners are against whom this wo is denounced; (1.) They are such as are given to drink, they make it their business, have their hearts upon it, and overcharge themselves with it. They rise early to follow strong drink, as husbandmen and tradesmen do to follow their employments; as if they were afraid of losing time from that which is the greatest mispending of time. Whereas commonly they that are drunken, are drunken in the night, when they have despatched the day, these neglect business, abandon it, and give up themselves to the service of the flesh; for they sit at their cups all day, and continue till night, till wine inlls them—inflame their lusts; chambering and wantonness follow upon rioting and drunkenness—inflame their passions; for who but such have *contentions and wounds without cause?* Prov. xxiii. 29—33. They make a perfect trade of drinking;

nor do they seek the shelter of the night for this work of darkness, as men ashamed of it, but *count it a pleasure to riot in the day-time.* See 2 Pet. ii. 13. (2.) They are such as are given to mirth; they have their feasts, and they are so merrily disposed, that they cannot dine or sup without music, music instruments of all sorts, like David, (*Amos vi. 5.*) like Solomon; (*Ecc. ii. 8.*) the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, must accompany the wine, that every sense may be gratified to a nicety: *they take the timbrel and harp, Job xxi. 12.* The use of music is lawful in itself; but when it is excessive, when we set our hearts upon it, mispend time in it, so that it crowds our spiritual and divine pleasures, and draws away the heart from God, then it turns into sin to us. (3.) They are such as never give their mind to any thing that is serious; they regard not the work of the Lord, they observe not his power, wisdom, and goodness, in those creatures which they abuse, and subject to vanity, nor the bounty of his providence, in giving them those good things which they make the food and fuel of their lusts. God's judgments have already seized them, and they are under the tokens of his displeasure, but they regard not, they consider not the hand of God in all these things; his hand is lifted up, but they will not see, because they will not disturb themselves in their pleasures, nor think what God is doing with them.

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

(1.) That they should be dislodged; the land should spue out these drunkards; (*v. 13.*) *My people (so they called themselves, and were proud of it) are therefore gone into captivity*, are as sure to go, as if they were gone already, *because they have no knowledge*; how should they have knowledge, when by their excessive drinking they make sots and fools of themselves? They set up for wits, but, because they regard not God's controversy with them, nor take any care to make their peace with him, they may truly be said to have no knowledge; and the reason is, because they will have none; they are inconsiderate and wilful, and therefore destroyed for lack of knowledge.

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

(3.) That multitudes should be cut off by famine and sword; (*v. 14.*) *Therefore hell has enlarged herself*; Tophet, the common burying-place, proves too little; so many are there to be buried, that they shall be forced to enlarge it: the grave has opened her mouth without measure, *never saying, It is enough*, *Prov. xxx. 15, 16.* It may be understood of the place of the damned; luxury and sensuality fill those regions of darkness and horror; there they are tormented, who made a god of their belly, *Luke xvi. 25.* *Phil. iii. 19.*

(4.) That they should be humbled and abased, and all their honours laid in the dust. This will be done effectually by death and the grave; *Their glory shall descend*, not only to the earth, but into it; it shall not descend after them, (*Ps. xlix. 17.*) to stand

them in any stead on the other side death, but it shall die and be buried with them; poor glory, which will thus wither! Did they glory in their numbers? Their multitude shall go down to the pit, Ezek. xxxi. 18.—xxxii. 32. Did they glory in the figure they made? Their pomp shall be at an end; their shouts with which they triumphed, and were attended. Did they glory in their mirth? Death will turn it into mourning; he that rejoices and revels, and never knows what it is to be serious, shall go thither where there is weeping and wailing. Thus the mean man and the mighty man meet together in the grave, and under mortifying judgments. Let a man be ever so high, death will bring him low, ever so mean, death will bring him lower; in the prospect of which, the eyes of the lofty should now be humbled, v. 15. It becomes those to *look low*, that must shortly be *laid low*.

3. What the fruit of these judgments shall be.

(1.) God shall be glorified, v. 16. He that is the Lord of hosts, and the holy God, shall be exalted and sanctified in the judgment and righteousness of these dispensations. His justice must be owned, in bringing those low that exalted themselves; and herein he is glorified; [1.] As a God of irresistible power: he will herein be exalted as the Lord of hosts, that is able to break the strongest, humble the proudest, and tame the most unruly. Power is not exalted but in judgment. It is the honour of God, that, though he has a mighty arm, yet *judgment and justice* are always the *habitation of his throne*, Ps. lxxxix. 13, 14. [2.] As a God of unspotted purity; he that is holy, infinitely holy, shall be sanctified, shall be owned and declared to be so in the righteous punishment of proud men. Note, When proud men are humbled, the great God is honoured, and ought to be honoured by us.

(2.) Good people shall be relieved and succoured; (v. 17.) *Then shall the lambs feed after their manner*; the meek ones of the earth, who follow the Lamb, who were persecuted, and put into fear by those proud oppressors, shall feed quietly, feed in the green pastures, and there shall be none to make them afraid. See Ezek. xxxiv. 14. When the enemies of the church are cut off, then have the churches rest; they shall feed at their pleasure; so some read it. *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves in abundant peace*. They shall feed according to their order or capacity; so others reads it; as they are able to hear the word, that bread of life.

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

18. Wo unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-rope! 19. That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it! 20. Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! 21. Wo

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

Here are,

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

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

1. Who are eagerly set upon sin, and violent in their sinful pursuits; (v. 18.) who *draw iniquity with cords of vanity*, who take as much pains to sin, as the cattle do, that draw in a team; who put themselves to the stretch for the gratifying of their inordinate appetites, and to humour a base lust, offer violence to nature itself. They think themselves as sure of compassing their wicked projects, as if they were pulling it to them with strong cart-ropes; but they will find themselves disappointed, for they will prove cords of vanity, which will break when they come to any stress; for the *righteous Lord will cut in sunder the cords of the wicked*, Ps. cxxix. 4. Job iv. 8. Prov. xxii. 8. They are by long custom

and confirmed habits, so hardened in sin, that they cannot get clear of it: those that sin through infirmity, are drawn away by sin; those that sin presumptuously, draw it to them, in spite of the oppositions of Providence and the checks of conscience. Some by sin understand the punishment of sin; they null God's judgments upon their own heads, as it were with cart-ropes.

2. Who set the justice of God at defiance, and challenge the Almighty to do his worst; (v. 19.) *They say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work;* this is the same language with that of the scoffers of the last days, who say, *Where is the promise of his coming?* And therefore it is, that, like them, they *draw iniquity with cords of vanity*, are violent and daring in sin, and walk after their own lusts, 2 Pet. iii. 1, 3, 4. (1.) They ridicule the prophets, and banter them; it is in scorn that they call God *the Holy One of Israel*, because the prophets used with great veneration to call him so. (2.) They will not believe the revelation of God's wrath from heaven against their ungodliness and unrighteousness; unless they see it executed, they will not know it, as if the curse were *brutum fulmen—a mere flash*, and all the threatenings of the word bugbears to frighten fools and children. (3.) If God should appear against them, as he has threatened, yet they think themselves able to make their part good with him, and provoke him to jealousy, as if they were stronger than he, 1 Cor. x. 22. "We have heard his word, but it is all talk; let him hasten his work, we shall shift for ourselves well enough." Note, Those that wilfully persist in sin, consider not the power of God's anger.

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

4. Who, though they are guilty of such gross mistakes as these, have a great opinion of their own judgments, and value themselves mightily upon their understanding; (v. 21.) they are *wise in their own eyes*; they think themselves able to disprove and baffle the reproofs and convictions of God's word, and to evade and elude both the searches and the reaches of his judgments; that they can outwit Infinite Wisdom, and countermine Providence itself. Or, it may be taken more generally; God resists the proud, those particularly who are conceited of their own wisdom, and lean to their own understanding; such must become fools, that they may be truly wise, or else, at their end, they shall appear to be fools before all the world.

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

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

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

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

2. How just the ruin will be; *Because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts*, and would not have him to reign over them; and as the law of Moses was rejected and thrown off, so the word of the Holy One of Israel by his servants the prophets, putting them in mind of his law, and calling them to obedience, was despised and disregarded. God does not reject men for every transgression of his law and word; but, when his word is despised, and his law cast away, what can they expect, but that God should utterly abandon them?

3. Whence this ruin should come; (v. 25.) it is destruction from the Almighty. (1.) The justice of God appoints it; for that is *the anger of the Lord*

which is kindled against his people, his necessary vindication of the honour of his holiness and authority. (2.) The power of God effects it; he hath stretched forth his hand against them; that hand which had many a time been stretched out for them against their enemies, is now stretched out against them, at full length, and in its full vigour; and *who knows the power of his anger?* Whether they are sensible of it or no, it is God that has smitten them, has blasted their vine, and made it wither.

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

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

When God designs the ruin of a provoking people,

(1.) He can send a great way off for instruments to be employed in it; he can raise forces from afar, and summon them from the end of the earth to attend his service, *v. 26*. Those who know him not, are made of use to fulfil his counsel, when, by reason of their distance, they can scarcely be supposed to have any ends of their own to serve. If God set up his standard, he can incline men's hearts to enlist themselves under it, though perhaps they know not why or wherefore. When the Lord of hosts is pleased to make a general muster of the forces he has at his command, he has a great army in an instant, *Joel ii. 2, 11*. He needs not sound a trumpet, or beat a drum, to give them notice, or to animate them; no, he does but hiss to them, or rather whistle to them, and that is enough; they hear that, and that puts courage into them. Note, God has all the creatures at his beck.

(2.) He can make them come into the service with incredible expedition; *Behold, they shall come with speed swiftly*. Note, [1.] Those who will do God's work must not loiter, must not linger, nor shall they when his time is come. [2.] Those who defy God's judgments, will be ashamed of their insolence when it is too late; they said scornfully, (*v. 19*.) *Let him make speed, let him hasten his work*, and they shall find, to their terror and confusion, that he will; *in one hour is the judgment come*.

(3.) He can carry them on in the service with amazing forwardness and fury. This is described here in very elegant and lofty expressions, *v. 27—*

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

## CHAP. VI.

Hitherto, it should seem, Isaiah had prophesied as a candidate, having only a virtual and implicit commission but here we have him (if I may so speak) solemnly ordained and set apart to the prophetic office by a more express explicit commission, as his work grew more upon his hands: or, perhaps, having seen little success of his ministry, he began to think of giving it up; and therefore God saw fit to renew his commission here in this chapter, in such a manner as might excite and encourage his zeal and industry in the execution of it, though he seemed to labour in vain. In this chapter, we have, I. A very awful vision which Isaiah saw of the glory of God, (*v. 1-4*.) the terror it put him into, (*v. 5*.) and the relief given him against that terror by an assurance of the pardon of his sins, *v. 6, 7*. II. A very awful com-



mission which Isaiah received to go as a prophet, in God's name, (v. 8.) by his preaching to harden the impenitent in sin, and ripen them for ruin; (v. 9-12.) yet with a reservation of mercy for a remnant, v. 13. And it was as to an evangelical prophet, that these things were showed him, and said to him.

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

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

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

What the prophet here saw is revealed to us, that we, mixing faith with that revelation, may in it, as in a glass, behold the glory of the Lord: let us turn aside therefore, and see this great sight with humble reverence.

I. See God upon his throne, and that throne high and lifted up, not only *above* other thrones, as it transcends them, but *over* other thrones, as it rules and commands them. Isaiah saw not *Jehovah*—the essence of God, (no man has seen that, or can see it,) but *Adonai*—his dominion; he saw the Lord Jesus; so this vision is explained, (John xii. 41.) that Isaiah now saw Christ's glory, and spake of him; which is an incontestable proof of the divinity of our Saviour. He it is, who, when, after his resurrection, he sat down on the right hand of God, did but sit down where he was before, John xvii. 5. See the rest of the Eternal Mind; Isaiah saw the Lord

sitting, Ps. xxix. 10. See the sovereignty of the Eternal Monarch; he sits upon a throne, a throne of glory, before which we must worship, a throne of government, under which we must be subject, and a throne of grace, to which we may come boldly. This throne is high, and lifted up above all competition and contradiction.

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

III. See the bright and blessed attendants on his throne, in and by whom his glory is celebrated, and his government served; (v. 2.) *Above the throne*, as it were hovering about it, or high to the throne, bowing before it, with an eye to it, the seraphim stood, the holy angels, who are called *seraphim—burners*; for he *makes his ministers a flaming fire*, (Ps. civ. 4.) they burn in love to God, and zeal for his glory against sin, and he makes use of them as instruments of his wrath, when he is a consuming Fire to his enemies. Whether they were only two or four, or (as I rather think) an *innumerable company of angels*, that Isaiah saw, is uncertain; see Dan. vii. 10. Note, It is the glory of the angels, that they are seraphim, have heat proportionable to their light, have abundance, not only of divine knowledge, but of holy love.

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

IV. Hear the anthem, or song of praise, which the angels sing to the honour of him that sits on the throne, v. 3. Observe, 1. How this song was sung; with zeal and fervency they cried aloud; and with unanimity they cried one to another, or with one another; they sang alternately, but in concert, and

without the least jarring voice to interrupt the harmony. 2. What the song was; it is the same with that which is sung by the four living creatures, Rev. iv. 8. Note, (1.) Praising God always was, and will be, to eternity, the work of heaven, and the constant employment of blessed spirits above, Ps. lxxxiv. 4. (2.) The church above is the same in its praises; there is no change of times, or notes, there.

Two things the seraphim here give God the praise of;

[1.] His infinite perfections in himself. Here is one of his most glorious titles praised; he is *the Lord of hosts*, of their hosts, of all hosts; and one of his most glorious attributes, his holiness, without which his being the Lord of hosts, or, (as it is in the parallel place, Rev. iv. 8.) *the Lord God Almighty*, could not be, so much as it is, the matter of our joy and praise; for power, without purity to guide it, would be a terror to mankind. None of all the divine attributes are celebrated in scripture so as this is; God's power was spoken twice, (Ps. lxii. 11.) but his holiness thrice, *Holy, holy, holy*. This bespeaks, *First*, The zeal and fervency of the angels, in praising God; they even want words to express themselves, and therefore repeat the same again. *Secondly*, The particular pleasure they take in contemplating the holiness of God; this is a subject they love to dwell upon, to harp upon, and are loath to leave. *Thirdly*, The superlative excellency of God's holiness above that of the purest creatures. He is holy, thrice holy, infinitely holy, originally, perfectly, and eternally, so. *Fourthly*, It may refer to the three persons in the Godhead, Holy Father, Holy Son, and Holy Spirit; (for it follows, (v. 8.) *Who will go for us?*) or, perhaps, to that which was, and is, and is to come; for that title of God's honour is added to this song, Rev. iv. 8. Some make the angels here to applaud the equity of that sentence which God was now about to pronounce upon the Jewish nation. Herein he was, and is, and will be, holy; his ways are equal.

[2.] The manifestation of these to the children of men; the earth is full of his glory, of the glory of his power and purity; for he is holy in all his works, Ps. cxlv. 17. The Jews thought the glory of God should be confined to their land; but it is here intimated, that, in gospel-times, (which are pointed to in this chapter,) the glory of God should fill all the earth; the glory of his holiness, which is indeed the glory of all his other attributes; this, then, *filled the temple*, (v. 1.) but, in the latter days, the *earth* shall be full of it.

V. Observe the marks and tokens of terror with which the temple was filled, upon this vision of the divine glory, v. 4. 1. The house was shaken; not only the door, but even *the posts of the door*, which were firmly fixed, *moved at the voice of him that cried*, at the voice of God, who called to judgment, (Ps. l. 4.) at the voice of the angel, who praised him. There are voices in heaven sufficient to drown all the noises of the many waters in this lower world, Ps. xciii. 3, 4. This violent concussion of the temple was an indication of God's wrath and displeasure against the people for their sins; it was an earnest of the destruction of it and the city, by the Babylonians first, and afterwards by the Romans; and it was designed to strike an awe upon us. Shall walls and posts tremble before God, and shall not we tremble? 2. The house was *darkened*; it was *filled with smoke*, which was as a *cloud spread upon the face of his throne*; (Job xxvi. 9.) we cannot take a full view of it, nor order our speech concerning it, by reason of darkness. In the temple above there will be no smoke, but every thing will be seen clearly; there God dwells in light, here he *makes darkness his pavilion*, 2 Chron. vi. 1.

5. Then said I, *Wo is me!* for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. 6. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; 7. And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, *Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged*. 3. Also I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?* Then I said, *Here am I; send me*.

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

1. The consternation that the prophet was put into by the vision which he saw of the glory of God; (v. 5.) *Then said I, Wo is me!* I should have said, "Blessed art thou, who hast been thus highly favoured, highly honoured, and dignified, for a time, with the privilege of those glorious beings that *always behold the face of our Father*. Blessed were those eyes which saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and those ears which heard the angels' praises." And, one would think, he should have said, "Happy am I, for ever happy; nothing now shall trouble me, nothing make me blush or tremble;" on the contrary, he cries out, "*Wo is me, for I am undone*. Alas for me! I am a gone man, *I shall surely die*; (Judges xiii. 22.—vi. 22.) I am silenced, I am struck dumb, struck dead." Thus Daniel, when he heard the words of the angel, *became dumb*, and there was *no strength, no breath, left in him*. Dan. x. 15, 17. Observe,

1. What the prophet reflected upon in himself, which terrified him; "I am undone, if God deal with me in strict justice, for I have made myself obnoxious to his displeasure, *because I am a man of unclean lips*." Some think he refers particularly to some rash word he had spoken, or to his sinful silence in not reproving sin with the boldness and freedom that were necessary; a sin which God's ministers have too much cause to charge themselves with, and to blush at the remembrance of it. But it may be taken more generally; *I am a sinner*; particularly, *I have offended in word*; and who is there that does not? Jam. iii. 2. We all have reason to bewail it before the Lord; (1.) That we are of unclean lips ourselves; our lips are not consecrated to God; he has not had the *first-fruits of our lips*, (Heb. xiii. 15.) and therefore they are counted common and unclean, *uncircumcised lips*, Exod. vi. 30. Nay, they have been polluted with sin; we have spoken the language of an unclean heart; that evil communication corrupts good manners; and thereby many have been defiled. We are unworthy and unmeet to take God's name into our lips. With what a pure lip did the angels praise God! "But," says the prophet, "I cannot praise him so, for *I am a man of unclean lips*." The best men in the world have reason to be ashamed of themselves, and the best of their services, when they come to compare with the holy angels. The angels had celebrated the purity and holiness of God; and therefore the prophet, when he reflects upon sin, calls it *unclean-*

ness; for the sinfulness of sin is its contrariety to the holy nature of God, and, upon that account, especially, it should appear both hateful and frightful to us. The impurity of our lips ought to be the grief of our souls, for by our words we shall be justified or condemned. (2.) That we dwell among those who are so too. We have reason to lament it, that not we ourselves only are polluted, but that the nature and race of mankind are so, the disease is hereditary and epidemical; which is so far from lessening our guilt, that it should rather increase our grief, especially considering that we have not done what we might have done for the cleansing of the pollution of other people's lips; nay, we have rather learned their way, and spoken their language, as Joseph in Egypt learned the courtier's oath, Gen. xlii. 16. "*I dwell in the midst of a people, who by their impudent sinnings are pulling down desolating judgments upon the land, which I, who am a sinner, too justly may expect to be involved in.*"

2. What gave occasion for these sad reflections at this time; *Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.* He saw God's sovereignty to be incontestable, he is the King; and his power irresistible, he is the Lord of hosts: these are comfortable truths to God's people, and yet they ought to strike an awe upon us. Note, A believing sight of God's glorious majesty should affect us all with reverence and godly fear. We have reason to be abased in the sense of that infinite distance that there is betwixt us and God, and our own sinfulness and vileness before him, and to be afraid of his displeasure. We are undone, if there be not a Mediator between us and this holy God, 1 Sam. vi. 20. Isaiah was thus humbled, to prepare him for the honour he was now to be called to as a prophet. Note, Those are fittest to be employed for God, who are low in their own eyes, and are made deeply sensible of their own weakness and unworthiness.

II. The silencing of the prophet's fears by the good words, and comfortable words, with which the angel answered him, v. 6, 7. One of the seraphim immediately flew to him, to purify him, and so to pacify him. Note, 1. God has strong consolations ready for holy mourners: they that humble themselves in penitential shame and fear shall soon be encouraged and exalted; they that are struck down with the visions of God's glory, shall soon be raised up again with the visits of his grace; he that tears will heal. 2. Angels are ministering spirits for the good of the saints, for their spiritual good. Here was one of the seraphim dismissed, for a time, from attending on the throne of God's glory, to be a messenger of his grace to a good man; and so well pleased was he with the office that he came flying to him. To our Lord Jesus himself, in his agony, there appeared an angel from heaven, strengthening him, Luke xxii. 43.

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

lives to make in the virtue of that satisfaction. It must be a coal from his altar, that must put life into us, and be our peace; it will not be done with strange fire.

(2.) An explication of this sign: *Lo, this has touched thy lips, to assure thee of this, that thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.* The guilt of thy sin is removed by pardoning mercy, the guilt of thy tongue-sins; thy corrupt disposition to sin is removed by renewing grace; and therefore nothing can hinder thee from being accepted with God as a worshipper, in concert with the holy angels, or from being employed for God as a messenger to the children of men." Those only who are thus purged from an evil conscience, are prepared to *serve the living God*, Heb. ix. 14. The taking away of sin is necessary to our speaking with confidence and comfort, either to God in prayer, or from God in preaching; nor are any so fit to display to others the riches and power of gospel-grace, as those who have themselves tasted the sweetness, and felt the influence of that grace; and those shall have their sin taken away, who complain of it as a burthen, and see themselves in danger of being undone by it.

III. The renewing of the prophet's mission, v. 8. Here is a communication between God and Isaiah about this matter. Those that would assist others in their correspondence with God, must not themselves be strangers to it; for how can we expect that God should speak by us, if we never heard him speaking to us, or that we should be accepted as the mouth of others to God, if we never spake to him heartily for ourselves? Observe here,

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

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

(2.) What the consultation is; *Whom shall I send? And who will go?* Some think it refers to the particular message of wrath against Israel, v. 9, 10. Who will be willing to go on such a melancholy errand, on which they will go in the bitterness of their souls? Ezek. iii. 14. But I rather take it more largely, for all those messages which he was intrusted to deliver, in God's name, to that people, in which that hardening work was by no means the primary intention, but a secondary effect of them, 2 Cor. ii. 16. *Whom shall I send?* Intimating that the business was such as required a choice and well-accomplished messenger, Jer. xlix. 19. God now appeared, attended with holy angels, and yet asks, *Whom shall I send?* For he would send them a *prophet from among their brethren*, Heb. ii. 5. Note, [1.] It is the unspeakable favour of God to us, that he is pleased to send us his mind by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid, and who are themselves concerned in the messages they bring

They are workers together with God, who are sinners and sufferers together with us. [2.] It is a rare thing to find one who is fit to go for God, and to carry his messages to the children of men; *Whom shall I send?* Who is sufficient? Such a degree of courage for God, and concern for the souls of men, as is necessary to make a man faithful, and withal such an insight into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, as is necessary to make a man skilful, are seldom to be met with. Such an interpreter of the mind of God is one of a thousand, Job xxxiii. 23. [3.] None are allowed to go for God but those who are sent by him; he will own none but those whom he appoints, Rom. x. 15. It is Christ's work to put men into the ministry, 1 Tim. i. 12.

2. The consent of Isaiah to it; *Then said I, Here am I, send me.* He was to go on a melancholy errand; the office seemed to go a begging, and every body declined it, and yet Isaiah offered himself to the service. It is an honour to be singular in appearing for God, Judges v. 7. We must not say, "I would go, if I thought I should have good success;" but, "I will go, and leave the success to God; here am I, send me." Isaiah had been himself in a melancholy frame, (v. 5.) full of doubts and fears; but now that he had the assurance of the pardon of his sin, the clouds were blown over, and he was fit for service, and forward to it. What he says bespeaks, (1.) His readiness; "Here am I; a volunteer, not pressed into the service." *Behold me*; so the word is. God says to us, *Behold me*, (ch. lxi. 1.) and, *Here I am*, (ch. lviii. 9.) even before we call; let us say so to him when he does call. (2.) His resolution; "*Here I am*, ready to encounter the greatest difficulties. *I have set my face as a flint.*" Compare this with ch. i. 4-7. (3.) His referring himself to God; "*Send me whither thou wilt; make what use thou pleasest of me. Send me; Lord, give me commission and full instruction; send me, and then, no doubt, thou wilt stand by me.*" It is a great comfort to those whom God sends, that they go for God, and may therefore speak in his name, as having authority; and be assured that he will bear them out.

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

God takes Isaiah at his word, and here sends him on a strange errand—to foretell the ruin of his people, and even to ripen them for that ruin; to preach that which, by their abuse of it, would be to them a savour of death unto death. And this was to be a type and figure of the state of the Jewish church in the days of the Messiah, when they should obsti-

nately reject the gospel, and should, thereupon, be rejected of God. These verses are quoted in part, or referred to, six times in the New Testament; which intimates, that, in gospel-times, these spiritual judgments would be most frequently inflicted; and though they make the least noise, and come not with observation, yet they are of all other the most dreadful.

Isaiah is here given to understand these four things:

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

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

3. That the consequence of this would be their utter ruin, v. 11, 12. The prophet had nothing to object against the justice of this sentence, nor does he refuse to go upon such an errand, but asks, "*Lord, how long?*" (An abrupt question;) "Shall it always be thus? Must I and other prophets always labour in vain among them, and will things never be better?" Or, (as should seem by the answer,) "Lord, what will it come to at last? What will be in the end hereof?" In answer to which, he was told that it should issue in the final destruction

of the Jewish church and nation. When the word of God, especially the word of the gospel, has been thus abused by them, they shall be unchurched, and, consequently, undone. Their cities shall be uninhabited, and their country-houses too; the land shall be untilled, *desolate with desolation*, as it is in the margin; the people who should replenish the houses and cultivate the ground, being all cut off by sword, famine, or pestilence, and those who escape with their lives being removed far away into captivity, so that there shall be a great and general forsaking in the midst of the land; that populous country shall become desert, and that glory of all lands shall be abandoned. Note, Spiritual judgments often bring temporal judgments along with them upon persons and places. This was in part fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, when the land, being left desolate, enjoyed her sabbaths seventy years; but the foregoing predictions being so expressly applied in the New Testament to the Jews in our Saviour's time, doubtless this points at the destruction of that people by the Romans, in which it had a complete accomplishment; and the effects of it that people and that land remain under to this day.

4. That yet a remnant should be reserved to be the monuments of mercy, *v. 13*. This was so in the last destruction of the Jewish nation; (*Rom. xi. 5.*) *At this present time there is a remnant*; for so it was written here, *But in it shall be a tenth*, a certain number, but a very small number, in comparison with the multitude that shall perish in their unbelief; it is that which under the law, was God's proportion; they shall be consecrated to God as the tithes were, and shall be for his service and honour. Concerning this tithe, this saved remnant, we are here told, (1.) That they shall return, (*ch. vii. 3. —x. 21.*) shall return from sin to God and duty; shall return out of captivity to their own land. God will turn them and they shall be turned. (2.) That they shall be eaten, shall be accepted of God, as the tithe was, which was meat in God's house, *Mal. iii. 10*. The saving of this remnant shall be meat to the faith and hope of those that wish well to God's kingdom. (3.) That they shall be like a timber-tree in winter, which has life, though it has no leaves; as a teil-tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, even then when they cast their leaves: so this remnant, though they may be stript of their outward prosperity, and share with others in common calamities, yet they shall recover themselves as a tree in the spring, and flourish again; though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down: there is *hope of a tree, though it be cut down, that it will sprout again*, *Job xiv. 7.* (4.) That this distinguished remnant shall be the stay and support of the public interests: the holy seed in the soul is the substance of the man; a principle of grace, reigning in the heart, will keep life there; he that is *born of God*, has *his seed remaining in him*, *1 John iii. 9*. So the holy seed in the land is the substance of the land, keeps it from being quite dissolved, and *bears up the pillars of it*, *Ps. lxxv. 3*. See *ch. i. 9*. Some read the foregoing clause with this, thus: *As the support at Shallecheth is in the elms and the oaks, so the holy seed is the substance thereof*; as the trees that grow on either side of the causeway (the raised way, or terrace-walk, that leads from the king's palace to the temple, (*1 Kings x. 5.*) at the gate of Shallecheth, *1 Chron. xxvi. 16.*) support the causeway by keeping up the earth, which would otherwise be crumbling away; so the small residue of religious, serious, praying, people, are the support of the state, and help to keep things together, and save them from going to decay. Some make the holy seed to be Christ; the Jewish nation was therefore saved from utter ruin, because *out of it,*

*as concerning the flesh, Christ was to come*, *Rom. ix. 5. Destroy it not, for that blessing is in it* (*ch. lxxv. 8.*) and when that blessing was come, it was soon destroyed. Now the consideration of this is designed for the support of the prophet in his work. Though far the greater part should perish in their unbelief, yet to some his word should be a saviour of life unto life. Ministers do not wholly lose their labour, if they be but instrumental to save one poor soul.

## CHAP. VII.

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

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

The prophet Isaiah had his commission renewed in the year that king Uzziah died, *ch. vi. 1*. Jotham his son reigned, and reigned well sixteen years: *2.*

that time, no doubt, Isaiah prophesied as he was commanded, and yet we have not in this book any of his prophecies dated in the reign of Jotham; but this which is put first, was in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham. Many excellent useful sermons he preached, which were not left and published upon record; for if all that was memorable had been written, *the world could not have contained the books*, John xxi. 25. Perhaps in the reign of Ahaz, a wicked king, he had not opportunity to preach so much at court as in Jotham's time, and therefore then he wrote the more, for a testimony against them.

Here is,

I. A very formidable design laid against Jerusalem by Rezin king of Syria, and Pekah king of Israel, two neighbouring potentates, who had of late made descents upon Judah severally; at the end of the reign of Jotham, the Lord began to send against Judah, Rezin and Pekah, 2 Kings xv. 37. But now, in the second or third year of the reign of Ahaz, encouraged by their former successes, they entered into an alliance against Judah; because Ahaz, though he found the sword over his head, began his reign with idolatry, *God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria and of the king of Israel*, (2 Chron. xxviii. 5.) and a great slaughter they made in his kingdom; (v. 6, 7.) flushed with this victory, they went up toward Jerusalem, the royal city, to war against it, to besiege it, and make themselves masters of it; but it proved, in the issue, that they could not gain their point. Note, The sin of a land brings foreign invasion upon it, and betrays the most advantageous posts and passes to the enemy. And God sometimes makes one wicked nation a scourge to another; but judgment ordinarily begins at the house of God.

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

III. The orders and directions given to Isaiah to go and encourage Ahaz in his distress; not for his own sake, (he deserved to hear nothing from God but words of terror, which might add affliction to his grief,) but because he was a son of David, and king of Judah. God had kindness for him for his father's sake, who must not be forgotten, and for his people's sake, who must not be abandoned, but would be encouraged if Ahaz were. Observe,

1. God appointed the prophet to meet Ahaz, though he did not send to the prophet to speak with him, nor desire him to inquire of the Lord for him; (v. 3.) *Go to meet Ahaz*. Note, God is often found of those who seek him not, much more will he be found of those who seek him diligently; he speaks comfort to many who not only are not worthy of it, but do not so much as inquire after it.

2. He ordered him to take his little son with him, because he carried a sermon in his name, *Shear-jashub—A remnant shall return*. The prophets sometimes recorded what they preached, in the significant names of their children, (as Hes. i. 4, 6, 9.) therefore Isaiah's children are said to be *for signs*, ch. viii. 18. This son was so called, for the encouragement of those of God's people who were carried captive, assuring them that they should return, at least a remnant of them, which is more than we can pretend to merit: yet, at this time, God was better than his word; for he took care not only that a remnant should return, but the whole number of those whom the confederate forces of Syria and Israel had taken prisoners, 2 Chron. xxviii. 15.

3. He directed him where he should find Ahaz; he was to meet with him not in the temple, or the synagogue, or royal chapel, but *at the end of the conduit of the upper pool*, where he was, probably, with many of his servants about him, contriving how to order the water-works, so as to secure them to the city, or deprive the enemy of the benefit of them, (ch. xxii. 9, 11. 2 Chron. xxxii. 3, 4.) or giving some necessary directions for the fortifying of the city as well as they could; and perhaps finding every thing in a very bad posture of defence, the conduit out of repair, as well as other things gone to decay, his fears increased, and he was now in greater perplexity than ever; therefore, *Go meet him there*. Note, God sometimes sends comforts to his people very seasonably, and, what time they are most afraid, encourages them to trust in him.

4. He put words in his mouth, else the prophet would not have known how to bring a message of good to such a bad man, a sinner in Zion, that ought to be afraid; but God intended it for the support of faithful Israelites.

(1.) The prophet must rebuke their fears, and advise them by no means to yield to them, but keep their temper, and preserve the possession of their own souls; (v. 4.) *Take heed, and be quiet*. Note, In order to comfort, there is need of caution; that we may be quiet, it is necessary that we take heed and watch against these things that threaten to disquiet us. "Fear not with this amazement, this fear, that weakens, and has torment; neither let thy heart be tender, so as to melt and fail within thee; but pluck up thy spirits, have a good heart on it, and be courageous; let not fear betray the succours which reason and religion offer for thy support." Note, Those who expect God should help them, must help themselves, Ps. xxvii. 14.

(2.) He must teach them to despise their enemies, not in pride, or security, or incogitancy, (nothing more dangerous than so to despise an enemy,) but in faith and dependence upon God. Ahaz's fear called them two powerful politic princes, for either of which he was an unequal match; but if united, he durst not look them in the face, or make head against them. "No," says the prophet, "they are two tails of smoking firebrands; they are angry, they are fierce, they are furious, as firebrands, as firebolls; and they make one another worse by being in a confederacy, as sticks of fire, put together, burn the more violently: but they are only smoking firebrands; and where there is smoke there is some fire, but it may not be so much as was feared; their threatening will vanish into smoke; *Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise*, (Jer. xli. 17.)



and Rezin king of Syria but a smoke; (and such are all the enemies of God's church, *smoking flax*, that will soon be quenched;) nay, they are but *tails of smoking firebrands*, in a manner burnt out already; their force is spent, they have consumed themselves with the heat of their own anger, you may put your foot on them, and tread them out." The two kingdoms of Syria and Israel were now near expiring. Note, The more we have an eye to God as a consuming Fire, the less reason we shall have to fear men, though they are ever so furious, nay, we shall be able to despise them as smoking firebrands.

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

[1.] That very thing which Ahaz thought most formidable, is made the ground of their defeat—and that was the depth of their designs and the height of their hopes; "*Therefore they shall be baffled and sent back with shame, because they have taken evil counsel against thee*, which is an offence to God; these firebrands are a *smoke in his nose*, (*ch. lxx. 5.*) and therefore must be extinguished." First, They are very spiteful and malicious, and therefore they shall not prosper. Judah had done them no wrong, they had no pretence to quarrel with Ahaz; but, without any reason, *Let us go up against Judah, and vex it*. Note, Those that are vexatious, cannot expect to be prosperous; they say, Those that love to do mischief, cannot expect to do well. Secondly, They are very secure, and confident of success; they will vex Judah by going up against it; yet that is not all, they do not doubt but to make a breach in the wall of Jerusalem, wide enough for them to march their army in at; or they count upon dissecting or dividing the kingdom into two parts, one for the king of Israel, the other for the king of Syria, who had agreed in one viceroys; a king to be set in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal; some obscure person; it is uncertain whether a Syrian or an Israelite: so sure were they of gaining their point, that they divided the prey before they had caught it. Note, Those that are most scornful, are commonly less successful, for surely God scorns the scornors.

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

(4.) He must give them a prospect of the destruction of these enemies, at last, that were now such a terror to them. [1.] They should neither of them enlarge their dominions, nor push their conquests any further. The head city of Syria is Damascus, and the head man of Damascus is Rezin; this he glories in, and this let him be content with, *v. 8*. The head city of Ephraim has long been Samaria, and the head man in Samaria is now Pekah the son of Remaliah; these shall be made to know their own, their bounds are fixed, and they shall not pass them, to make themselves masters of the cities of Judah, much less to make Jerusalem their prey. Note, As God has appointed men the bounds of their habitation, (Acts xvii. 26.) so he has appointed princes the bounds of their dominion, within which they ought to confine themselves, and not encroach upon their neighbours' rights. (2.) Ephraim, which perhaps was the more malicious

and forward enemy of the two, should shortly be quite rooted out, and should be so far from seizing other people's lands, that they should not be able to hold their own. Interpreters are much at a loss how to contemplate the sixty-five years within which *Ephraim shall cease to be a people*; for the captivity of the ten tribes was but eleven years after this; and some make it a mistake of the transcriber, and think it should be read, *within six and five years*, just eleven. But it is hard to allow that. Others make it to be sixty-five years from the time that the prophet Amos first foretold the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes: and some late interpreters make it to look as far forward as the last desolation of that country by Esarhaddon, which was about sixty-five years after this; then Ephraim was so broken, that it was no more a people. Now it was the greatest folly in the world for them to be ruining their neighbours, who were themselves marked for ruin, and so near to it. See what a prophet told them at this time, when they were triumphing over Judah, (2 Chron. xxviii. 10.) *Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?*

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

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

Here,

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

now gracious God is even to the evil and unthankful; Ahaz is bid to choose his sign, as Gideon about the fleece; (Judg. vi. 37.) let him ask for a sign either in the air, or earth, or water, for God's power is the same in each.

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

III. The prophet reproves him and his court, him and the house of David, the whole royal family, for their contempt of prophecy, and the little value they had for divine revelation; (v. 13.) "*Is it a small thing for you to weary men by your oppression and tyranny, with which you make yourselves burthensome and odious to all mankind? But will you weary my God also, with the affronts you put upon him?*" As the unjust judge that neither feared God nor regarded man, Luke xviii. 2. *Ye have wearied the Lord with your words,* Mal. ii. 17. Nothing is more grievous to the God of heaven than to be distrusted; "*Will ye weary my God? Will ye suppose him to be tired and unable to help you, or to be weary of doing you good? Whereas the youths may faint and be weary, you may have tired all your friends, the Creator of the ends of the earth faints not, neither is weary,*" ch. xl. 30, 31. Or thus; in affronting the prophets, you think you put a slight only upon men like yourselves, and consider not that you affront God himself, whose messengers they are, and put a slight upon him, who will resent it accordingly. The prophet here calls God his God, with a great deal of pleasure; Ahaz would not say, He is my God, though the prophet had invited him to say so, (v. 11.) *The Lord thy God;* but Isaiah will say, "He is mine." Note, Whatever others do, we must avouch the Lord for ours, and abide by him.

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

1. "A sign in general of his good-will to Israel and to the house of David; you may conclude that he has mercy in store for you, and that you are not forsaken of your God, how great soever your present distress and danger are; for of your nation, of your family, the Messiah is to be born, and you cannot be destroyed while that Blessing is in you; which shall be introduced," (1.) "In a glorious manner; for whereas you have been often told that he should be born among you, I am now further to tell you that he shall be born of a virgin; which will signify both the divine power and the divine purity with which he shall be brought into the world; that he shall be an extraordinary person, for he shall not be born by ordinary generation, and that he shall be a holy thing, not stained with the common pollutions of the human nature, therefore incontestably fit to have the throne of his father David given him." Now this, though it was to be accomplished above 500 years after, was a most encouraging sign

to the house of David, (and to them, under that title, this prophecy is directed, v. 13.) and an assurance that God would not cast them off. Ephraim did indeed envy Judah, (ch. xii. 13.) and sought the ruin of that kingdom, but could not prevail, for the sceptre should never depart from Judah till the coming of Shiloh, Gen. xlix. 10. These whom God designs for the great salvation, may take that for a sign to them, that they shall not be swallowed up by any trouble they may meet with in the way. (2.) The Messiah shall be introduced on a glorious errand, wrapped up in his glorious name; they shall call his name *Immanuel—God with us*, God in our nature, God at peace with us, in covenant with us. This was fulfilled in their calling him *Jesus—a Saviour*; (Matth. i. 21—23.) for if he had not been *Immanuel—God with us*, he could not have been *Jesus—a Saviour*. Now this was a further sign of God's favour to the house of David and the tribe of Judah; for he that intended to work this great salvation among them, no doubt would work out for them all those other salvations which were to be the types and figures of this, and as it were preludes to this. "Here is a sign for you, not in the depth, or in the height, but in the prophecy, in the promise, in the covenant made with David, which you are no strangers to; the promised Seed shall be *Immanuel, God with us*; let that word comfort you, (ch. viii. 10.) *God is with us*, and (v. 8.) that your land is *Immanuel's land*. Let not the heart of the house of David be moved thus, (v. 2.) nor let Judah fear the setting up of the son of Tabeal, (v. 6.) for nothing can cut off the entail on the Son of David that shall be *Immanuel*." Note, The strongest consolations, in time of trouble, are these which are borrowed from Christ, our relation to him, our interest in him, and our expectations of him and from him.

Of this Child it is further foretold, (v. 15.) that though he shall not be born like other children, but of a virgin, yet he shall be really and truly man, and shall be nursed and brought up like other children; *Butter and honey shall he eat*, as other children do, particularly the children of that land which *flowed with milk and honey*. Though he be conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, yet he shall not therefore be fed with angels' food, but, as it becomes him, shall be in all things made like unto his brethren, Heb. ii. 17. Nor shall he, though born thus by extraordinary generation, be a man immediately, but, as other children, shall advance gradually through the several states of infancy, childhood and youth, to that of manhood, and, growing in wisdom and stature, shall at length wax strong in spirit, and come to maturity, so as to know how to refuse the evil and choose the good. See Luke ii. 40, 52. Note, Children are fed when they are little, that they may be taught and instructed when they are grown up; they have their maintenance in order to their education.

2. Here is another sign in particular of the speedy destruction of these potent princes that were now a terror to Judah, v. 16. "Before this child;" so it should be read; "this child which I have now in my arms," (he means not Immanuel, but Shear-jashub his own son, whom he was ordered to take with him for a sign, v. 3.) "before this child shall know how to refuse the evil and choose the good," (and these who saw what his present stature and forwardness were, would easily conjecture how long that would be,) "before this child will be three or four years older, the land that thou abhorrest, these confederate forces of Israelites and Syrians, whom thou hast such an enmity to, and standest in such dread of, shall be forsaken of both their kings, both Pekah and Rezin;" who were in so close an alliance, that they seemed as if they were the kings

but of one kingdom. This was fully accomplished, for within two or three years after this, Hosea conspired against Pekah, and slew him, (2 Kings xv. 30.) and before that, the king of Assyria took Damascus, and slew Rezin, 2 Kings xvi. 9. Nay, there was a present event, which happened immediately, and which this child carried the prediction of in his name, which was a pledge and earnest of this further event. *Shear-jashub* signifies, *The remnant shall return*, which doubtless points at the wonderful return of those 200,000 captives which Pekah and Rezin had carried away, who were brought back, not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. Read the story, 2 Chron. xxviii. 8—15. The prophetic naming of this child having thus had its accomplishment, no doubt this, which was further added concerning him, should have its accomplishment likewise, that Syria and Israel should be deprived of both their kings. One mercy from God encourages us to hope for another, if it engages us to prepare for another.

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

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

VOL. IV.—G

I. The judgment threatened is very great, *v. 17*. It is very great, for it is general; it shall be brought upon the prince himself, (high as he is, he shall not be out of the reach of it,) and upon the people, the whole body of the nation, and upon the royal family, *upon all thy father's house*; it shall be a judgment entailed on posterity, and shall go along with the royal blood. It is very great, for it shall be unprecedented, *days that have not come*; so dark, so gloomy, so melancholy, as never were the like since the revolt of the ten tribes, when Ephraim departed from Judah, which was indeed a sad time to the house of David. Note, The longer men continue in sin, the sorer punishments they have reason to expect: it is the Lord that will bring these days upon them, for our times are in his hand; and who can resist or escape the judgments he brings?

II. The enemy that should be employed as the instrument of this judgment, is the king of Assyria. Ahaz reposed strong confidence in that prince for help against the confederate powers of Israel and Syria, and minded the less what God said to him by his prophet for his encouragement, because he built much upon his interest in the king of Assyria, and had meanly promised to be his servant, if he would send him some succours; he had also made him a present of gold and silver, for which he drained the treasures both of church and state, 2 Kings xvi. 7. 8. Now God threatens that that king of Assyria, whom he made his stay instead of God, should become a scourge to him. He was so speedily; for when he came to him, he distressed him, but strengthened him not: the reed not only brake under him, but ran into his hand, and pierced it, (2 Chron. xxviii. 20.) and from thenceforward the kings of Assyria were, for a long time, grieving thorns to Judah, and gave them a great deal of trouble. Note, The creature that we make our hope, commonly proves our hurt: the king of Assyria, not long after this, made himself master of the ten tribes, carried them captive, and laid their country waste, so as fully to answer the prediction here; and perhaps it may refer to that, as an explanation of *v. 8*, where it is foretold that Ephraim shall be broken, that it shall not be a people; and it is easy to suppose that the prophet, at *v. 17*, turns his speech to the king of Israel, denouncing God's judgments against him for invading Judah. But the expositors universally understood it of Ahaz and his kingdom. Now observe,

1. Summons given to the invaders; (*v. 18*.) *The Lord shall whistle for the fly and the bee*: See *ch. v. 26*. Enemies that seem as contemptible as a fly or a bee, and are as easily crushed; yet, when God pleases, they shall do his work as effectually as lions and young lions. Though they are as far distant from one another as the rivers of Egypt and the land of Assyria, yet they shall punctually meet to join in this work, when God commands their attendance; for when God has work to do, he will not be at a loss for instruments to do it with.

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

3. Great desolations made, and the country generally depopulated; (*v. 20*.) *The Lord shall have*

the hair of the head, and beard, and feet; he shall sweep all away, as the leper, when he was cleansed, *shaved off all his hair*, Lev. xiv. 8, 9. This is done with a razor which is hired; which God has hired, as if he had none of his own; but what he hires, and whom he employs in any service for him, he will pay for: see Ezek. xxix. 18, 19. Or which Ahaz has hired for his assistance. God will make that to be an instrument of his destruction, which he hired into his service. Note, Many are beaten with that arm of flesh which they trusted to rather than to the arm of the Lord, and which they were at a great expense upon; when by faith and prayer they might have found cheap and easy succour in God.

4. The consequences of this general depopulation:

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

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

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

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

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

(6.) There where briars and thorns were wont to be of use, and to do good service, even in the hedges, for the defence of the enclosed grounds, they shall be plucked up, and all laid in common. There shall be briars and thorns in abundance, there where they should not be, but none where there should be, v. 25. *The hills that shall be digged with the mattock*, for special use, from which the cattle used to be kept off with the fear of briars and thorns, shall now be thrown open; the *hedges broken down for the boar out of the wood* to waste it, Ps. lxxx. 12, 13. It shall be left at large for oxen to run in, and lesser cattle.

See the effect of sin and the curse; it has made the earth a forest of thorns and thistles, except as it is forced into some order by the constant care and labour of man: and see what folly it is to set our hearts upon possession of lands, be they ever so fruitful,

ever so pleasant; if they lie ever so little neglected and uncultivated, or if they be abused by a wasteful careless heir or tenant, or the country be laid waste by war, they will soon become frightful deserts. Heaven is a paradise not subject to such changes.

## CHAP. VIII.

This chapter, and the four next that follow it, (to ch. 13.) are all one continued discourse or sermon; the scope of which is, to show the great destruction that should now shortly be brought upon the kingdom of Israel, and the great disturbance that should be given to the kingdom of Judah by the king of Assyria, and that both were for their sins; but rich provision is made of comfort for those that fear God, in those dark times, referring especially to the days of the Messiah. In this chapter we have, I. A prophecy of the destruction of the confederate kingdoms of Syria and Israel by the king of Assyria, v. 1. . 4. II. Of the desolations that should be made by that proud, victorious prince, in the land of Israel and Judah, v. 5. . 8. III. Great encouragement given to the people of God in the midst of those destructions; they are assured, 1. That the enemies shall not gain their point against them, v. 9, 10. 2. That if they kept up the fear of God, and kept down the fear of man, they should find God their Refuge, (v. 11. . 14.) and, while others stumbled, and fell into despair, they should be enabled to wait on God, and should see themselves reserved for better times, v. 15. . 18. *Lastly*, he gives a necessary caution to all, at their peril, not to consult with familiar spirits, for they would thereby throw themselves into despair, but to keep close to the word of God, v. 19. . 22. And these counsels, and these comforts, will still be of use to us in time of trouble.

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

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

I. Orders given to the prophet to write this prophecy, and publish it to be seen and read of all men, and to leave it upon record, that when the thing came to pass, they might know that God had sent him; for that was one end of the prophecy, John xiv. 29. He must take a great roll, which would

contain those five chapters, fairly written in words at length; he must write in it all that he had foretold concerning the king of Assyria's invading the country; he must write it with a man's pen, in the usual way and style of writing, so as that it might be legible and intelligible by all. See Hab. ii. 2. *Write the vision and make it plain.* They that speak and write of the things of God, should avoid obscurity, and study to speak and write so as to be understood, 1. Cor. xiv. 19. They that write for men, should write with a man's pen, and not covet the pen or tongue of angels. And, forasmuch as it is usual to put some short but significant comprehensive title before books that are published, the prophet is directed to call his book *Mahe-shalath-hash-baz*—*Make speed to the spoil, hasten to the prey*; intimating that the Assyrian army should come upon them with great speed, and make great spoil; by this title the substance and meaning of the book would be inquired after by those that had read it, or heard it read. It is sometimes a good help to memory to put much matter in few words, which serve as handles by which we take hold of more.

II. The care of this prophet to get this record well attested; (v. 2.) *I took unto me faithful witnesses to record*; he wrote the prophecy in their sight and presence, and made them subscribe their names to it, that they might be ready, if afterward there should be occasion, to make oath of it, that the prophet had foretold the descent which the Assyrians made upon that country so long before; he names the witnesses for the greater certainty, that they might be appealed to by any; they were two in number; (for *out of the mouth of two witnesses shall every word be established*;) one was, Uriah the priest; he is mentioned in the story of Ahaz, but for none of his good deeds, for he humoured Ahaz with an idolatrous altar; (2 Kings xvi. 10, 11.) however, at this time, no exception lay against him, he was a faithful witness. See what full satisfaction the prophets took care to give to all persons concerned, of the sincerity of their intentions, that we might know with a full assurance the *certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed*, and that we have not followed cunningly-devised fables.

III. The making of the title of his book the name of his child, that it might be the more taken notice of, and the more effectually perpetuated, v. 3. His wife (because the wife of a prophet) is called *the prophetess*; she conceived and bare a son, another son, who must carry a sermon in his name, as the former had done, (ch. vii. 3.) but with this difference, that spake mercy, *Shear-jashub*—*The remnant shall return*; but that being slighted, this speaks judgment, *Mahe-shalath-hash-baz*—*In making speed to the spoil he shall hasten, or he has hastened, to the prey.* The prophecy is doubled, even in this one name, for the thing was certain; *I will hasten my word*, Jer. i. 12. Every time the child was called by his name, or any part of it, it would serve as a memorandum of the judgments approaching. Note, It is good for us often to put ourselves in mind of the changes and troubles we are liable to in this world, and which perhaps are at the door. When we look with pleasure on our children, it should be with the alloy of this thought, We know not what they are yet reserved for.

IV. The prophecy itself, which explains this mystical name;

1. That Syria and Israel, who were now in confederacy against Judah, should in a very little time become an easy prey to the king of Assyria and his victorious army; (v. 4.) *“Before the child, now newly born and named, should have knowledge to cry, My father, and My mother.”* (which are usually some of the first things that children know, and some of the first words that children speak,) “in about a

year or two, the riches of Damascus, and the spoil of Samaria, those cities that are now so secure themselves, and so formidable to their neighbours, shall be taken away before the king of Assyria, who shall plunder both city and country, and send the best effects of both into his own land, to enrich that, and as trophies of his victory.” Note, Those that spoil others, must expect to be themselves spoiled, (ch. xxxiii. 1.) for the Lord is righteous, and those that are troublesome shall be troubled.

2. That forasmuch as there were many in Judah, that were secretly in the interests of Syria and Israel, and were affected to the house of David, God would chastise them also by the king of Assyria, who should create a great deal of vexation to Judah, as was foretold, ch. vii. 17.

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

(2.) The judgment which God would bring upon them for this sin. The same king of Assyria, that should lay Ephraim and Syria waste, should be a scourge and terror to those of their party in Judah, v. vii. 8. Because they *refuse the waters of Shiloah*, and will not accommodate themselves to the government God has set over them, but are uneasy under it, *therefore the Lord brings upon them the waters of the river, strong and many*, the river Euphrates; they slighted the land of Judah, because it had no river to boast of comparable to that; the river at Jerusalem was a very inconsiderable one. “Well,” says God, “if you be such admirers of Euphrates, you shall have enough of it; the king of Assyria, whose country lies upon that river, shall come with his glory, with his great army, which you cry up as his glory, despising your own king, because he cannot bring such an army as that into the field; God shall bring that army upon you.” If we value men, if we overvalue them, for their worldly wealth and power, it is just with God to make them by that a scourge to us. It is used as an argument against magnifying rich men, that *rich men oppress us*, Jam. ii. 3, 6. Let us be best pleased with the waters of Shiloah, that go softly, for rapid streams are dangerous. It is threatened that the Assyrian army should break in upon them like a deluge, or inundation of waters, bearing down all before it, should come up over all his channels, and overflow all his banks; it would be to no purpose to oppose or withstand them; Sennacherib and his army should pass through Judah, and meet with so little resistance, that it should look more like a march through the country, than a descent upon it; *He shall reach even to the neck*; he shall advance so far as to lay siege to Jerusalem, the head of the kingdom, and nothing but that shall be kept out of his hands; for that was the holy city. Note, in the greatest deluge of trouble, God can, and will, keep the head of his people above water,

and so preserve their comforts and spiritual lives; that the waters that come into their souls, may reach to the neck, (Ps. lxxix. 1.) but there shall their proud waves be stayed. And here is another comfortable intimation, that though the stretching out of the wings of the Assyrian, that bird of prey, though the right and left wing of his army, should fill the breadth of the land of Judah, yet still it was Immanuel's land. It is thy land, O Immanuel; it was to be Christ's land, for there he was to be born, and live, and preach, and work miracles. He was Zion's King, and therefore had a peculiar interest in, and concern for, that land. Note, The lands that Immanuel owns for his, as he does all those lands that own him, though they may be deluged, shall not be destroyed: *for when the enemy shall come in like a flood, Immanuel shall secure his own, and shall lift up a standard against him, ch. lix. 19.*

9. Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. 10. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us. 11. For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me, that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, 12. Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy: neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. 13. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. 14. And he shall be for a sanctuary: but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15. And many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

The prophet here returns to speak of the present distress that Ahaz, and his court and kingdom, were in, upon account of the threatening confederacy of the ten tribes, and the Syrians, against them. And in these verses,

I. He triumphs over the invading enemies, and, in effect, sets them at defiance, and bids them do their worst; (v. ix. 10.) "*O ye people, ye of far countries, give ear to what the prophet says to you in God's name.*"

1. "We doubt not but you will now make your utmost efforts against Judah and Jerusalem: you associate yourselves in a strict alliance, you gird yourselves, and again you gird yourselves, you prepare for action, you address yourselves to it with resolution, you gird on your swords, you gird up your loins, you animate and encourage yourselves and one another with all the considerations you can think of, you take counsel together, call councils of war, and all heads are at work, about the proper method for making yourselves masters of the land of Judah, you speak the word, you come to resolutions concerning it, and are not always deliberating, you determine what to do, and are very confident of the success of it, that the matter will be accomplished with a word's speaking." Note, It is with a great deal of policy, resolution, and assurance, that the church's enemies carry on their designs against it; and abundance of pains they take to roll a stone that will certainly return upon them.

2. "This is to let you know that all your efforts will be ineffectual; you cannot, you shall not, gain your point, nor carry the day; *you shall be broken in pieces*; though you associate yourselves, though you gird yourselves, though you proceed with all the policy and precaution imaginable, yet, I tell you again and again, all your projects shall be baffled, *you shall be broken in pieces*; nay, not only your attempts shall be ruined, but your attempts shall be your ruin; you shall be broken by those designs you have formed against Jerusalem; *your councils shall come to naught*; for there is no wisdom or counsel against the Lord; your resolves will not be put in execution, they shall not stand; you speak the word, but *who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, if the Lord commandeth it not?* What sets up itself against God, and his cause, and counsel, cannot stand, but must inevitably fall. For God is with us;" (this refers to the name of Immanuel—God with us;) "the Messiah is to be born among us, and a people designed for such an honour cannot be given up to utter ruin; we have now the special presence of God with us in his temple, his oracles, his promises, and these are our defence. God is with us, he is on our side, to take our part, and fight for us; and if God be for us, who can be against us?" Thus does the daughter of Zion despise them.

II. He comforts and encourages the people of God with the same comforts and encouragements which he himself had received: the attempts made upon them were very formidable; the house of David, the court and royal family, were at their wits' end, (ch. vii. 2.) and then no marvel if the people were in a consternation.

Now, 1. The prophet tells us how he was himself taught of God not to give way to such amazing fears as the people were disturbed with, nor to run into the same measures with them; (v. 11.) "*The Lord spake to me with a strong hand, not to walk in the way of this people*; not to say as they say, nor do as they do, nor to entertain the same frightful apprehensions of things, nor to approve of their projects of making peace upon any terms, or calling in the help of the Assyrians." God instructed the prophet not to go down the stream. Note, (1.) There is a proneness in the best of men to be frightened at threatening clouds, especially when fears are epidemical. We are all too apt to walk in the way of the people we live among, though it be not a good way. (2.) Those whom God loves and owns, he will instruct, and enable to swim against the stream of common corruptions, particularly of common fears. He will find ways to teach his own people not to walk in the way of other people, but in a sober singularity. (3.) Corruption is sometimes so active in the hearts even of good men, that they have need to be taught their duty with a strong hand, and it is God's prerogative to teach so, for he only can give an understanding, and overpower the contradiction of unbelief and prejudice. He can teach the heart; and herein none teaches like him. (4.) Those that are to teach others have need to be themselves well instructed in their duty, and then they teach most powerfully, when they teach experimentally; the word that comes from the heart, is most likely to reach to the heart; and what we are ourselves by the grace of God instructed in, we should, as we are able, teach others also.

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

(1.) He cautions them against a sinful fear, v. 12. It seems, it was the way of this people at this time, and fear is catching; he whose heart fails him, makes his brethren's heart to fail, like his heart: (Deut. xx. 8.) therefore *Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy*; that is, [1.] "Be not associated with them in the confederacies they are projecting and fore-



casting for. Do not join with those that, for the securing of themselves, are for making a league with the Assyrians, through unbelief, and distrust of God and their cause. "Do not come into any such confederacy." Note, It concerns us, in time of trouble, to watch against all such fears as put us upon taking any indirect courses for our own security. [2.] "Be not afraid of the confederacies they frighten themselves and one another with. Do not amuse yourselves with the apprehension of a confederacy, upon every thing that stirs, nor, when any little thing is amiss, cry out presently, There is a plot, a plot. When they talk what dismal news there is, *Syria is joined with Ephraim*, what will become of us? Must we fight, or must we flee, or must we yield? Do not you fear their fear. *Be not afraid of the signs of heaven*, as the heathen are, Jer. x. 2. Be not afraid of evil things on earth, but let your hearts be fixed. Fear not that which they fear, nor be afraid as they are. Be not put into such a fright as causes trembling and shaking;" so the word signifies. Note, When the church's enemies have sinful confederacies on foot, the church's friends should watch against the sinful fears of those confederacies.

(2.) He advises them to a gracious, religious fear; *But sanctify the Lord of hosts himself*, v. 13. Note, The believing fear of God is a special preservative against the disquieting fear of man; see 1 Pet. iii. 14, 15, where this is quoted, and applied to suffering Christians. [1.] We must look upon God as the Lord of hosts, that has all power in his hand, and all creatures at his beck. [2.] We must sanctify him accordingly, give him the glory due to that name, and carry it toward him as those that believe him to be a holy God. [3.] We must make him our Fear, the Object of our fear, and make him our Dread; keep up a reverence of his providence, and stand in awe of his sovereignty; be afraid of his displeasure, and silently acquiesce in all his disposals. Were we but duly affected with the greatness and glory of God, we should see the pomp of our enemies eclipsed and clouded, and all their power restrained and under check; see Neh. iv. 14. That they are afraid of the reproach of men, *forget the Lord their Maker*, ch. li. 12, 13. Compare Luke xii. 4, 5.

(3.) He assures them of a holy security and serenity of mind, in so doing; (v. 14.) "*He shall be for a Sanctuary*"; make him your Fear, and you shall find him your Hope, your Help, your Defence, and your mighty Deliverer. He will sanctify and preserve you. He will be for a Sanctuary;" [1.] "To make you holy; He will be your Sanctification;" so some read it. If we sanctify God by our praises, he will sanctify us by his grace. [2.] "To make you easy; He will be your Sanctuary, to which you may flee for safety, and where you are privileged from all the arrests of fear; you shall find an inviolable refuge and security in him, and see yourselves out of the reach of danger." They that truly fear God, shall not need to fear any evil.

III. He threatens the ruin of the ungodly and unbelieving, both in Judah and Israel. They have no part nor lot in the foregoing comforts; that God, who will be a Sanctuary to those who trust in him, will be a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence, to those who *leave these waters of Shiloah, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son*, (v. 6.) who make the creature their fear and their hope, v. 14, 15. The prophet foresees that the greatest part of both the houses of Israel would not sanctify the Lord of hosts, and to them he would be *for a Gin and a Snare*; he would be a terror to them, as he would be a Support and Stay to those that trusted in him. Instead of profiting by the word of God, they should be offended at it; and the providences of God, in-

stead of leading them to him, would drive them from him. What was a savour of life unto life to others, would be a savour of death unto death to them. So that *many among them shall stumble and fall*; they shall fall both into sin and into ruin, they shall fall by the sword, shall be taken prisoners, and go into captivity. Note, If the things of God be an offence for us, they will be an undoing to us. Some apply this to the unbelieving Jews, who rejected Christ, and to whom he became a Stone of stumbling, for the apostle quotes this scripture with application to all those who persisted in their unbelief of the gospel of Christ; (1 Pet. ii. 8.) to them he is a rock of offence, because, being disobedient to the word, they stumble at it.

16. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. 17. And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. 18. Behold, I, and the children whom the LORD hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel, from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion. 19. And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto the wizards that peep and that mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? 20. To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is because there is no light in them*. 21. And they shall pass through it hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that, when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward. 22. And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and *they shall be driven to darkness*.

In these verses, we have,

I. The unspeakable privilege which the people of God enjoy, in having the oracles of God consigned over to them, and being intrusted with the sacred writings; that they may sanctify the Lord of hosts, may make him their Fear, and find him their Sanctuary; *Bind up the testimony*, v. 16. Note, It is a great instance of God's care of his church and love of it, that he has lodged in it the valuable treasure of divine revelation. 1. It is a *testimony* and a *law*; not only this prophecy is so, which must therefore be preserved safe for the comfort of God's people in the approaching times of trouble and distress, but the whole word of God is so; God has attested it, and he has enjoined it. As a testimony, it directs our faith; as a law, it directs our practice; and we ought both to subscribe to the truths of it, and to submit to the precepts of it. 2. This testimony and this law are bound up and sealed, for we are not to add to them, or diminish from them; they are a letter from God to man, folded up and sealed; a proclamation under the broad seal. The binding up and sealing of the Old Testament signified, that the full explication of many of the prophecies of it was reserved for the New Testament times; (Dan. xii. 4.) *Seal the book till the time of the end*; but what was then bound up and sealed, is now open and unsealed, and *revealed unto babes*, Matth. xi. 25. Yet with reference to the other world, and the future state, still the testimony is bound up and sealed, for we know but in part, and prophecy but

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

11. The good use which we ought to make of this privilege. This we are taught,

1. By the prophet's own practice and resolutions, v. 17, 18. He embraced the law and the testimony, and he had the comfort of it, in the midst of the many discouragements he met with. Note, Those ministers can best recommend the word of God to others, that have themselves found the satisfaction of relying upon it. Observe,

(1.) The discouragements which the prophet laboured under; he specifies two; [1.] The frowns of God, not so much upon himself, but upon his people, whose interests lay very near his heart; "*He hides his face from the house of Jacob*, and seems, at present, to neglect, and lay them under the tokens of his displeasure." The prophet was himself employed in revealing God's wrath against them, and yet grieved thus for it, as one that did not desire the woful day. If the house of Jacob forsake the God of Jacob, let it not be thought strange that he hides his face from them. [2.] The contempt and reproaches of men, not only upon himself, but upon his disciples, among whom the law and the testimony were sealed; *I and the children which the Lord hath given me, are for signs and wonders*; we are gazed at as monsters or outlandish people, pointed at as we go along the streets. Probably the prophetic names that were given his children were ridiculed and bantered by the profane scoffers of the town. *I am as a wonder unto many*, Ps. lxxi. 7. God's people are the world's wonder, (Zech. iii. 8.) for their singularity, and because they run not with them to the same excess of riot, 1 Pet. iv. 4. The prophet was herein a type of Christ; for this is quoted (Heb. ii. 13.) to prove that believers are Christ's children; *Behold, I and the children which God hath given me*. Parents must look upon their children as God's gifts, his gracious gifts; Jacob did so, Gen. xxxiii. 5. Ministers must look upon their converts as their children, and be tender of them accordingly, (1 Thess. ii. 7.) and as the children which God has given them; for whatever good we are instrumental of to others, it is owing to the grace of God. Christ looks upon believers as his children, which the Father gave him; (John xvii. 6.) and both he and they are for signs and wonders, spoken against, (Luke ii. 34.) every where spoken against, Acts xxviii. 22.

(2.) The encouragement he took, in reference to these discouragements. [1.] He saw the hand of God in all that which was discouraging to him, and kept his eye upon that. Whatever trouble the house of Jacob is in, it comes from God's hiding his face; nay, whatever contempt is put upon him or his friends, it is from the Lord of hosts; he has bidden Shimei curse David, Job xix. 13—xxx. 11. [2.] He saw God dwelling in mount Zion, manifesting himself to his people, and ready to hear their prayers, and receive their homage. Though, for the present, he hide his face from the house of Jacob, yet they know where to find him, and recover the sight of him; he dwells in Mount Zion. [3.] He therefore resolved to wait upon the Lord, and to look for him; to attend his motions, even while he hid his face, and to expect with an humble assurance his returns in a way of mercy. Those that wait upon God by faith and prayer, may look for him with hope and joy. When we have not sensible comforts, we must still keep up our observ-

ance of God and obedience to him, and then wait awhile; *at evening-time it shall be light*.

2. By the counsel and advice which he gives to his disciples, among whom the law and the testimony were sealed, to whom were committed the lively oracles.

(1.) He supposes they would be tempted, in the day of their distress, to consult *them that had familiar spirits*, that dealt with the devil, asked his advice, and desired to be informed by him concerning things to come, that they might take their measures accordingly. Thus Saul, when he was in straits, made his application to the witch of Endor, (1 Sam. xxviii. 7, 15.) and Ahaziah to the God of Ekron, 2 Kings i. 2. These conjurors had fantastic gestures and tones; they peeped and muttered, they muffled their heads, that they could neither see nor be seen plainly, but peeped and were peeped at; or both the words here used may refer to their voice or manner of speaking; they delivered what they had to say with a low, hollow, broken sound, scarcely articulate; and sometimes in a puling or mournful tone, like a crane, or a swallow, or a dove, *ch. xxxviii. 14*. They spake not with that boldness and plainness which the prophets of the Lord spake with, but as those who desire to amuse people rather than to instruct them; yet there were those who were so wretchedly stitish as to seek to them, and to court others to do so, even the prophet's hearers, who knew better things, whom therefore the prophet warns not to say *A confederacy* with such. There were express laws against this wickedness, (Lev. xix. 31.—xx. 27.) and yet it was found in Israel, is found even in Christian nations; but let all that have any sense of religion show it, by startling at the thought of it; *Get thee behind me, Satan*. Dread the use of spells and charms, and consulting those that by hidden arts pretend to tell fortunes, cure diseases, or discover things lost; for this is a heinous crime, and, in effect, denies the God that is above.

(2.) He furnishes them with an answer to this temptation, puts words into their mouths: "If any go about to ensnare you, give them this reply: *Should not a people seek to their God? What! for the living to the dead!*" [1.] "Tell them it is a principle of religion, that a people ought to seek unto their God; now Jehovah is our God, and therefore to him we ought to seek, and to consult with him, and not with them that have familiar spirits. *All people will thus walk in the name of their God*, Mic. iv. 5. They that made the hosts of heaven their gods, *sought unto them*, Jer. viii. 2. Should not a people under guilt, and in trouble, seek to their God for pardon and peace? Should not a people in doubt, in want, and in danger, seek to their God for direction, supply, and protection? Since the Lord is our God, and we are his people, it is certainly our duty to seek him." [2.] "Tell them it is an instance of the greatest folly in the world, to seek for living men to dead idols." What can be more absurd than to seek to lifeless images for life and living comforts, or to expect that our friends that are dead, when we deify them and pray to them, should do that for us which our living friends cannot do? *The dead know not any thing, nor is there with them any device or working*, Eccl. ix. 5, 10. It is folly therefore for the living to make their court to them, with any expectation of relief from them. Necromancers consulted the dead, as the witch of Endor, and so proclaimed their own folly; we must live by the living, and not by the dead; what life or light can we look for from them that have no light or life themselves?

(3.) He directs them to consult with the oracles of God; if the prophets that were among them did not speak directly to every case, yet they had the

written word, and to that they must have recourse. Note, Those will never be drawn to consult wizards, that know how to make a good use of their Bibles. Would we know how we may seek to our God, and come to the knowledge of his mind? To the law and to the testimony. There you will see what is good, and what the Lord requires of you. Make God's statutes your counsellors, and you will be counselled right.

Observe, [1.] What use we must make of the law and the testimony; we must speak according to that word; we must make this our standard, conform to it, take advice from it, make our appeal to it, and in every thing be overruled and determined by it; consent to those wholesome healing words, (1 Tim. vi. 3.) and speak of the things of God in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches. It is not enough to say nothing against it, but we must speak according to it.

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

(4.) He reads the doom of those that seek to familiar spirits, and regard not God's law and testimony; there shall not only be no light to them, no comfort or prosperity, but they may expect all horror and misery, v. 21, 22. [1.] The trouble they feared shall come upon them; they shall pass through the land, or pass to and fro in the land, unfixed, unsettled, and driven from place to place by the threatening power of an invading enemy; they shall be hardly bestead whither to go for the necessary supports of life; either because the country would be so impoverished, that there would be nothing to be had, or at least themselves and their friends so impoverished, that there would be nothing to be had for them; so that they who used to be fed to the full shall be hungry. Note. Those that go away from God, go out of the way of all good. [2.] They shall be very uneasy to themselves, by their discontent and impatience under their trouble. A good man may be in want, but then he quiets himself, and strives to make himself easy; but these people, when they shall be hungry, shall fret themselves, and when they have nothing to feed on, their vexation shall prey upon their own spirits; for fretfulness is a sin that is its own punishment. [3.] They shall be very provoking to all about them, nay, to all above them; when they find all their measures broken, and themselves at their wit's end, they will forget all the rules of duty and decency, and will treasonably curse their king, and blasphemously curse their God; and this more than in their thought, and in their bed-chamber, Eccl. x. 20. They begin with cursing their king, for managing the public affairs no better, as if the fault were his, when the best and wisest kings cannot secure success; but when they have broken the bonds of their allegiance, no marvel if those of their religion do not hold them long; they next curse their God, curse him, and die; they quarrel with his

providence, and reproach that, as if he had done them wrong; *The foolishness of man perverts his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord*, Prov. xix. 3. See what need we have to *keep our mouth as with a bridle*, when our heart is hot within us; for the language of fretfulness is commonly very offensive. [4.] They shall abandon themselves to despair, and, which way soever they look, shall see no probability of relief; they shall look upward, but heaven shall frown upon them, and look gloomy; and how can it be otherwise, when they curse their God? They shall look to the earth, but what comfort can that yield to those whom God is at war with? There is nothing there but trouble, and darkness, and dimness of anguish, every thing threatening, and not one pleasant gleam, not one hopeful prospect; but they shall be driven to darkness by the violence of their own fears, which represent every thing about them black and frightful. This explains what he had said, (v. 20.) that there shall be no light to them. Those that shut their eyes against the light of God's word, will justly be abandoned to darkness, and left to wander endlessly, and the sparks of their own kindling will do them no kindness.

## CHAP. IX.

The prophet, in this chapter, (according to the directions given him ch. iii. 10, 11.) saith to the righteous, *It shall be well with thee*, but *Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him*. Here are, 1. Gracious promises to those that adhere to the law and to the testimony; while those that seek to familiar spirits, shall be driven into darkness and dimness, they shall see a great light, relief in the midst of their distresses, typical of gospel-grace. 1. In the doctrine of the Messiah, v. 1..3. 2. His victories, v. 4, 5. 3. His government and dominion, as Immanuel, v. 6, 7. 11. Dreadful threatenings against the people of Israel, who had revolted from, and were enemies to, the house of David; that they should be brought to utter ruin, that their pride should bring them down, (v. 8..10.) that their neighbours should make a prey of them, (v. 11, 12.) that, for their impenitency and hypocrisy, all their ornaments and supports should be cut off, (v. 13..17.) and that by the wrath of God against them, and their wrath one against another, they should be brought to utter ruin, v. 18..21. And this is typical of the final destruction of all the enemies of the son of David and his kingdom.

1. **N**EVERTHELESS, the dimness *shall not be such as was in her vexation*, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. 2. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. 3. Thou hast multiplied the nation, *and not increased the joy*: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, *and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil*. 4. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. 5. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but *this shall be with burning and fuel of fire*. 6. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder:

and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7. Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

The first words of this chapter plainly refer to the close of the foregoing chapter, where every thing looked black and melancholy: *Behold, trouble, and darkness, and dimness*; very bad, yet not so bad, but that to the upright *there shall arise light in the darkness*, (Ps. cxii. 4.) and at evening-time it shall be light, Zech. xiv. 7. Nevertheless, it shall not be such dimness (either not such for kind, or not such for degree,) as sometimes there has been. Note, In the worst of times, God's people have a *nevertheless* to comfort themselves with, something to allay and balance their troubles; they are persecuted, but not forsaken, (2 Cor. iv. 9.) sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, 2 Cor. vi. 10. And it is a matter of comfort to us, when things are at the darkest, that he who *forms the light, and creates the darkness*, (ch. xlv. 7.) has appointed both their bounds, and set the one over against the other, Gen. i. 4. He can say, "Hitherto the dimness shall go, so long as it shall last, and no further, no longer." Three things are here promised, and they all point ultimately at the grace of the gospel, which the saints then were to comfort themselves with the hopes of, in every cloudy and dark day, as we now are to comfort ourselves, in time of trouble, with the hopes of Christ's second coming, though that be now, as his first coming then was, a thing at a great distance. The mercy likewise which God has in store for his church, in the latter days, may be a support to those that are mourning with her for her present calamities. We have here the promise,

I. Of a glorious light, which shall so qualify, and by degrees dispel, the dimness, that it shall not be, as it sometimes has been *not such as was in her vexation*; there shall not be such dark times as were formerly, when, at first, he *lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and Naphtali*, which lay remote, and most exposed to the inroads of the neighbouring enemies; and, afterward, he *more grievously afflicted the land by the way of the sea, and beyond Jordan*, (v. 1.) referring, probably, to those days when *God began to cut Israel short, and to smite them in all their coasts*, 2 Kings x. 32. Note, 1. God tries what lesser judgments will do with a people, before he brings greater. But, 2. If a light affliction do not do its work with us, to humble and reform us, we must expect to be afflicted more grievously; for when God judges he will overcome.

Well, those were dark times with the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, and there was *dimness of anguish in Galilee of the Gentiles*, both in respect of ignorance, (they did not speak according to the law and testimony, and then there was *no light in them*, ch. viii. 20.) and in respect of trouble and the desperate posture of their outward affairs; we have both together, 2 Chron. xv. 3, 5. *Israel has been without the true God and a teaching priest, and in those times there was no peace*: but the dimness threatened (ch. viii. 22.) shall not prevail to such a degree; for, (v. 2.) *The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light*. (1.) At this time, when the prophet lived, there were many prophets in Judah and Israel, whose prophecies were a great light both for direction and comfort to the people

of God, who adhered to the law and the testimony; beside the written word, they had prophecy; there were those that had showed them how *long*, (Ps. lxxiv. 9.) which was a great satisfaction to them, when, in respect of their outward troubles, they *sat in darkness, and dwelt in the land of the shadow of death*. (2.) This was to have its full accomplishment when our Lord Jesus began to appear as a Prophet, and to preach the gospel in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, and in Galilee of the Gentiles. And the Old Testament prophets, as they were witnesses to him, so they were types of him. When he came, and dwelt in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali, then this prophecy is said to be fulfilled, Matth. iv. 13—16. Note, [1.] Those that want the gospel, walk in darkness, and know not what they do, or whither they go; and they dwell in the land of the shadow of death, in thick darkness, and in the utmost danger. [2.] When the gospel comes to any place, to any soul, light comes, a great light, a shining light, which will shine more and more. It should be welcome to us, as light is to them that sit in darkness, and we should readily entertain it, both because it is of such sovereign use to us, and brings its own evidence with it. Truly this light is sweet.

II. Of a glorious increase, and an universal joy arising from it; (v. 3.) "*Thou, O God, hast multiplied the nation*, the Jewish nation, which thou hast mercy in store for; though it has been diminished by one sore judgment after another, yet now thou hast begun to multiply it again." The numbers of a nation are its strength and wealth, if the numerous be industrious; and it is God that increases nations, Job xii. 23. Yet it follows, "*Thou hast not increased the joy*"; the carnal joy and mirth, and those things that are commonly the matter and occasion of that; but, notwithstanding that, they joy before thee, there is a great deal of serious spiritual joy among them, joy in the presence of God, with an eye to him." This is very applicable to the times of gospel-light, spoken of, v. 2. Then God multiplied the nation, the gospel-Israel. "And to him" (so the Masorites read it) "*thou hast magnified the joy, to every one that receives the light*." The following words favour this reading; they joy before thee; they come before thee in holy ordinances with great joy; their mirth is not like that of Israel, under their vines and fig-trees, (thou hast not increased that joy,) but it is in the favour of God and in the tokens of his grace." Note, The gospel, when it comes in its light and power, brings joy along with it, and those who receive it aright, therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice; therefore the conversion of the nations is prophesied of by this, Ps. lxxvii. 4. Let the nations be glad, and sing for joy, Ps. xevi. 11. 1. It is holy joy: "They joy before thee;" they rejoice in spirit, (as Christ did, Luke x. 21.) and that is before God. In the eye of the world, they are always as sorrowful, and yet, in God's sight, *always rejoicing*, 2 Cor. vi. 10. 2. It is great joy, it is according to the joy in harvest, when those who sowed in tears, and have with long patience waited for the precious fruits of the earth, reap in joy; and as in war, men rejoice, when, after a hazardous battle, they divide the spoil. The gospel brings with it plenty and victory; but these that would have joy of it, must expect to go through a *hard work*, as the husbandman, before he has the joy of harvest, and a *hard conflict*, as the soldier, before he has the joy of dividing the spoil; but the joy, when it comes, will be an abundant recompense for the toil. See Acts viii. 8, 39.

III. Of a glorious liberty and enlargement; (v. 4, 5.) "They shall rejoice before thee, and with good reason, for thou hast broken the yoke of his burthen, and made him easy, for he shall no longer

be in servitude, and thou hast broken the staff of his shoulder, and the rod of his oppressor, that rod of the wicked which rested long on the lot of the righteous;" as the Midianites' yoke was broken from off the neck of Israel by the agency of Gideon. If God makes former deliverances his patterns in working for us, we ought to make them our encouragements to hope in him, and to seek to him; (Ps. lxxxiii. 9.) *Do unto them as to the Midianites.* What temporal deliverance this refers to, is not clear, probably, the preventing of Sennacherib from making himself master of Jerusalem, which was done, as in the day of Midian, by the immediate hand of God; and whereas other battles were usually won with a great deal of noise, and by the expense of much blood, this shall be done silently and without noise; *Under his glory God shall kindle a burning; (ch. x. 16.) a fire not blown shall consume him,* Job xx. 26. But doubtless it looks further, to the blessed fruits and effects of that great light which should visit them that sat in darkness; it would bring liberty along with it, *deliverance to the captives,* Luke iv. 18. 1. The design of the gospel, and the grace of it, is, to break the yoke of sin and Satan, to remove the burthen of guilt and corruption, and to free us from the rod of those oppressors, that we might be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Christ brake the yoke of the ceremonial law, (Acts xv. 10. Gal. v. 1.) and delivered us *out of the hands of our enemies,* that we might *serve him without fear,* Luke i. 74, 75. 2. This is done by the Spirit working like fire, (Matth. iii. 11.) not as the battle of the warrior is fought, with confused noise; no, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but it is done with the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, *ch. iv. 4.* It is done as in the day of Midian, by a work of God upon the hearts of men. Christ is our Gideon; it is his sword that doeth wonders.

But who, where is he that shall undertake and accomplish these great things for the church? He tells us, (*v. 6, 7.*) they shall be done by the Messiah, *Immanuel*, that son of a virgin, whose birth he had foretold, (*ch. vii. 14.*) and now speaks of, in the prophetic style, as a thing already done: the Child is born; not only because it was as certain, and he was as certain of it, as if it had been done already; but because the church, before his incarnation, reaped great benefit and advantage by his undertaking in the virtue of that first promise concerning the *Seed of the woman*, Gen. iii. 15. As he was the *Lamb slain*, so he was the *Child born, from the foundation of the world*, Rev. xiii. 8. All the great things that God did for the Old Testament church, were done by him as the eternal Word, and for his sake as the Mediator. He was the Anointed, to whom God had respect, (Ps. lxxxiv. 9.) and it was for the Lord's sake, for the Lord Christ's sake, that God caused his face to shine upon his sanctuary, Dan. ix. 17. *Therefore* the Jewish nation, and particularly the house of David, were preserved many a time from imminent ruin, because that blessing was in them. What greater security therefore could be given to the church of God then, that it should be preserved, and be the special care of Divine Providence, than this, that God had so great a mercy in reserve for it? The Chaldee Paraphrase understands it of the Man that shall endure for ever, even Christ. And it is an illustrious prophecy of him and of his kingdom, which doubtless they that waited for the consolation of Israel built much upon, often turned to, and read with pleasure.

(1.) See him in his humiliation; the same that is the mighty God, is a Child born; the Ancient of Days becomes the Infant of a span long; the everlasting Father is a Son given. Such was his conde-

scension in taking our nature upon him; thus did he humble and empty himself, to exalt and fill us. He is born into our world: *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.* He is given, freely given, to be all that to us, which our case, in our fallen state, calls for; God so loved the world, that he gave him. He is born to us, he is given to us, us men, and not to the angels that sinned; it is spoken with an air of triumph, and the angel seems to refer to these words in the notice he gives to the shepherds of the Messiah's being come; (Luke ii. 11.) *unto you is born, this day, a Saviour.* Note, Christ's being born and given to us, is the great foundation of our hopes, and fountain of our joys, in times of greatest grief and fear.

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

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

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

*Secondly, He is the mighty God; God, the mighty One.* As he has wisdom, so he has strength, to go through with his undertaking; he is able to save to the utmost; and such is the work of the Mediator, that no less a power than that of the mighty God could accomplish it.

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

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

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

shoulder, (the *key of the house of David*, ch. xxii. 22.) out he shall bear the burthen of it. The Father shall devolve it upon him, so that he shall have an incontestable right to govern; and he shall undertake it, so that no doubt can be made of his governing well, for he shall set his shoulder to it, and will never complain, as Moses did, of his being overcharged; *I am not able to bear all this people*, Numb. xi. 11, 14.

Glorious things are here spoken of Christ's government, v. 7.

*First*, That it shall be an increasing government; it shall be multiplied, the bounds of his kingdom shall be more and more enlarged, and many shall be added to it daily; the lustre of it shall increase, and it shall shine more and more brightly in the world. The monarchies of the earth were each less illustrious than the other; so that what began in gold ended in iron and clay, and every monarchy dwindled by degrees: but the kingdom of Christ is a growing kingdom, and will come to perfection at last.

*Secondly*, That it shall be a peaceable government, agreeable to his character as the Prince of Peace: he shall rule by love, shall rule in men's hearts; so that wherever his government is, there shall be peace; and as his government increases, the peace shall increase; the more we are subject to Christ, the more easy and safe we are.

*Thirdly*, That it shall be a rightful government; he that is the Son of David, shall reign upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, which he is entitled to; *God shall give him the throne of his father David*, Luke i. 32, 33. The gospel-church, in which Jew and Gentile are incorporated, is the holy hill of Zion, on which Christ reigns, Ps. ii. 6.

*Fourthly*, That it shall be administered with prudence and equity, and so as to answer the great end of government, which is the establishment of the kingdom; he shall order it, and settle it, with justice and judgment; every thing is, and shall be, well managed, in the kingdom of Christ, and none of his subjects shall ever have cause to complain.

*Fifthly*, That it shall be an everlasting kingdom; here shall be no end of the increase of his government, it shall be still growing; no end of the increase of the peace of it, for the happiness of the subjects of this kingdom shall last to eternity, and perhaps shall be progressive *in infinitum—for ever*. He shall reign *from henceforth even for ever*; not only throughout all generations of time, but even then when the kingdom shall be delivered up to God, even the Father, the glory both of the Redeemer and the redeemed shall continue eternally.

*Lastly*, That God himself has undertaken to bring all this about; The *Lord of hosts*, who has all power in his hand, and all creatures at his beck, shall perform this, shall preserve the throne of David till this Prince of peace is settled in it; his zeal shall do it; his jealousy for his own honour, and the truth of his promise, and the good of his church. Note, The heart of God is much upon the advancement of the kingdom of Christ among men; which is very comfortable to all those that wish well to it; the zeal of the Lord of hosts will overcome all opposition.

8. The LORD sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel. 9. And all the people shall know, *even* Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart, 10. The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change *them into cedars*.

11. Therefore the LORD shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together; 12. The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is* stretched out still. 13. For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the LORD of hosts. 14. Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. 15. The ancient and honourable, he *is* the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he *is* the tail. 16. For the leaders of this people cause *them* to err; and *they that are* led of them *are* destroyed. 17. Therefore the LORD shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows: for every one *is* a hypocrite and an evil-doer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is* stretched out still. 18. For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest; and they shall mount up *like* the lifting up of smoke. 19. Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother. 20. And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm: 21. Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: *and they together shall be* against Judah. For this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is* stretched out still.

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

I. The preface to this prediction; (v. 8.) *The Lord sent a word into Jacob*; sent it by his servants the prophets; he warns before he wounds; he sent notice what he would do, that they might meet him in the way of his judgments, but they would not take the hint, took no care to turn away his wrath, and so it lighted upon Israel; for no word of God shall fall to the ground. It fell upon them as a storm of ruin and hail from on high, which they could not avoid. "It has *lighted upon them*; it is as sure to come as if it were come already; and all the people shall know by feeling it, what they would not know by hearing of it." Those that are willingly ignorant of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against sin and sinners, shall be made to know it.

II. The sins charged upon the people of Israel,



which provoked God to bring these judgments upon them.

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

2. Their incorrigibility under all the rebukes of Providence hitherto; (v. 13.) *The people turn not unto him that smites them*; they are not wrought upon to reform their lives, to forsake their sins, and to return to their duty; *neither do they seek the Lord of hosts*; either they are atheists, and have no religion, or idolaters, and seek to those gods that are the creatures of their own fancy, and the works of their own hands. Note, That which God designs, in smiting us, is, to turn us to himself, and to set us a seeking him; and if this point be not gained by lesser judgments, greater may be expected. God smites, that he may not kill.

3. Their general corruption of manners and abounding profaneness. (1.) Those that should have reformed them, helped to debauch them; (v. 16.) *The leaders of this people mislead them*, and cause them to err, by conniving at their wickedness, and countenancing wicked people, and by setting them bad examples; and then no wonder if they that are led of them be deceived, and so destroyed; but it is ill with a people when their physicians are their worst disease. *They that bless this people, or call them blessed*, (so the margin reads it,) that flatter them, and soothe them up in their wickedness, and cry *Peace, peace, to them*, they cause them to err; and they that are called *blessed of them*, are *swallowed up* ere they are aware. We have reason to be afraid of those that speak well of us when we do ill; see Prov. xxiv. 24.—xxix. 5. (2.) Wickedness was universal, and all were infected with it; (v. 17.) *Every one is a hypocrite and evil-doer*. If there be any that are good, they do not, they dare not, appear; for every mouth speaks folly and villany; every one is profane toward God, (so the word properly signifies,) and an evil-doer toward man; these two commonly go together; they that fear not God, regard not man; and then every mouth speaks folly, falsehood, and reproach, both against God and man; for *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*.

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

1. In general, hereby they exposed themselves to the wrath of God, which should both devour as fire, and darken as smoke. (1.) It should devour as fire; (v. 18.) *Wickedness shall burn as the fire*; the displeasure of God, incurred by sin, shall consume the sinners, who have made themselves as briars and thorns before it, and as the thickets of the forest; combustible matter, which the wrath of the Lord of hosts, the mighty God, will go through, and burn together. (2.) It should darken as smoke; the briars and thorns, when the fire consumes them,

shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke, so that the whole land shall be darkened by it; they shall be in trouble, and see no way out; (v. 19.) *The people shall be as the fuel of the fire*. God's wrath fastens upon none but those that make themselves fuel for it, and then they mount up as the smoke of sacrifices, being made victims to divine justice.

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

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

4. That the desolation should be as general as the corruption had been, and none should escape it, v. 17. (1.) Not those that were the objects of complacency: none shall be spared for love: *The Lord shall have no joy in their young men*, that were in the flower of their youth; nor will he say, *Deal gently with the young men for my sake*; no, "Let them fall with the rest, and with them let the seed of the next generation perish." (2.) Not those that were the objects of compassion; none shall be spared for pity; He shall not have mercy on the fatherless and widows, though he is, in a particular manner, their Patron and Protector: they had corrupted their way like all the rest; and if the poverty and helplessness of their state was not an argument with them to keep them from sin, they could not expect it should be an argument with God to protect them from judgments.

5. That they should pull one another to pieces, and every one should help forward the common ruin, and they should be cannibals to themselves and one another; *No man shall spare his brother*, if he come in the way of his ambition or covetousness, or if he have any colour to be revenged on him; and how can they expect God should spare them, when they show no compassion one to another? Men's passion and cruelty one against another provoke God to be angry with them all, and are an evidence that he is so. Civil wars soon bring a kingdom to desolation; such there were in Israel, when, *for the transgression of the land, many were the princes thereof*, Prov. xxviii. 2. In these intestine broils, men *snatched on the right hand and yet were hungry still*, and did eat the flesh of their own arm, preyed upon themselves for hunger, or upon their nearest relations that were as their own flesh, v. 20. This bespeaks, (1.) Great famine and scarcity; when men had pulled all they could to them, it was so little, that they were still hungry, at least God did not bless it to them; so that *they eat and have not enough*, Haggai i. 6. (2.) Great rapine and plunder; *Jusque datum accleri—Iniquity is established by law*. The hedge of property, which is a hedge of protection to men's estates, shall be plucked up, and every man shall think all that his own which he can lay his hands on; *Vivitur ex rapto; non hospes ab hospite tutus—They live on the spoil, and the rites of hospitality are all violated*. And yet when men thus catch at that which is none of their own, they are not satisfied. Covetous desires are insatiable, and this curse is entailed on that which is ill got, that it will never do well.

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

6. That though they should be followed with all those judgments, yet God would not let fall his controversy with them. It is the heavy burthen of this song; (v. 12, 17, 21.) *For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still*; (1.) They do nothing to turn away his anger; they do not repent and reform, they do not humble themselves and pray; none stand in the gap, none answer God's calls, nor comply with the designs of his providences, but they are hardened and secure. (2.) His anger therefore continues to burn against them, and *his hand is stretched out still*. The reason why the judgments of God are prolonged, is, because the point is not gained, sinners are not brought to repentance by them; *the people turn not to him that smites them*, and therefore he continues to smite them; for when God judges, he will overcome; and the proudest, stoutest sinner shall either bend or break.

## CHAP. X.

The prophet, in this chapter, is dealing, I. With the proud oppressors of his people at home, that abused their power, to pervert justice, whom he would reckon with for their tyranny, v. 1-4. II. With a threatening invader of his people from abroad, Sennacherib king of Assyria;

concerning whom, observe, 1. The commission given him to invade Judah, v. 5, 6. 2. His pride and insolence in the execution of that commission, v. 7-11, 13, 14. 3. A rebuke given to his haughtiness, and a threatening of his fall and ruin, when he had served the purposes for which God raised him up, v. 12, 15-19. 4. A promise of grace to the people of God, to enable them to bear up under the affliction, and to get good by it, v. 20-23. 5. Great encouragement given to them not to fear this threatening storm, but to hope that, though for the present all the country was put into a great consternation by it, it would end well, in the destruction of this formidable enemy, v. 24-34. And this is intended to quiet the minds of good people, in reference to all the threatening efforts of the wrath of the church's enemies; if God be for us, who can be against us? None to do us any harm.

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

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

Here is, 1. The indictment drawn up against these oppressors, v. 1, 2. They are charged, (1.) With making wicked laws and edicts: they decree unrighteous decrees, contrary to natural equity and the law of God; and what mischiefs they prescribe, those under them write it, enrol it, and put it into the formality of a law. Wo to the superior powers that devise and decree these decrees! They are not too high to be under the divine check. And wo to the inferior officers that draw them up, and enter them upon record! They are not too mean to be within the divine cognizance; *the writers that write the grievousness*, principal and accessories, shall fall under the same wo. Note, It is bad to do hurt, but it is worse to do it with design and deliberation, to do wrong to many, and to involve many in the guilt of doing wrong. (2.) With perverting justice in the execution of the laws that were made: no people had statutes and judgments so righteous as they had; and yet corrupt judges found ways to *turn aside the needy from judgment*, to hinder them from coming at their right, and recovering what was their due, because they were needy and poor, and such as they could get nothing by, nor expect any bribes from. (3.) With enriching themselves by oppressing those that lay at their mercy, whom they ought to have protected: they make widows' houses and castles their prey, and they rob the fatherless of the little that is left them, because they have no friend to appear for them. Not to relieve them if

they had wanted, not to right them if they were wronged, had been crime enough in men that had wealth and power; but to rob them because on the side of the oppressors there was power, and the oppressed had no comforter, (Ecc. iv. 1.) is such a piece of barbarity, as one would think, none could ever be guilty of, that had either the nature of a man, or the name of an Israelite.

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

3. Sentence passed upon them, by which they are doomed, some to imprisonment and captivity; *They shall bow down among the prisoners, or under them*: those that were most highly elevated in sin, shall be most heavily loaded, and most deeply sunk in trouble; others to death, they shall fall first, and so shall fall under the rest of the slain; they that had trampled upon the widows and fatherless, shall themselves be trodden down; (v. 4.) "This it will come to," says God, "without me; because you have deserted me, and driven me away from you." Nothing but utter ruin can be expected by those that live without God in the world; that cast him behind their back, and so cast themselves out of his protection.

And yet, *for all this, his anger is not turned away*; which intimates not only that God will proceed in his controversy with them, but that they shall be in a continual dread of it; they shall, to their unspeakable terror, see his hand still stretched out against them, and there shall remain nothing but a *fearful looking-for of judgment*.

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

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

The destruction of the kingdom of Israel by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, was foretold in the foregoing chapter, and it had its accomplishment in the sixth year of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xviii. 10. It was total and final, head and tail were all cut off. Now the correction of the kingdom of Judah by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, is foretold in this chapter; and this prediction was fulfilled in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, when that potent prince, encouraged by the successes of his predecessor against the ten tribes, *came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them, and*

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

Now let us see here,

I. How God, in his sovereignty, deputed the king of Assyria to be his servant, and made use of him as a mere tool to serve his own purposes with; (v. 5, 6.) "O Assyrian, know this, that thou art the *rod of mine anger*; and I will send thee to be a scourge to the people of my wrath." Observe here, 1. How bad the character of the Jews is, though they appeared very good; they are a hypocritical nation, that made a profession of religion, and, at this time particularly, of reformation, but were not truly religious, not truly reformed, not so good as they pretended to be, now that Hezekiah had brought goodness into fashion. When rulers are pious, and so religion is in reputation, it is common for nations to be hypocritical; they are a profane nation; so some read it. Hezekiah had in a great measure cured them of their idolatry, and now they run into profaneness; nay, hypocrisy is profaneness: none profane the name of God so much as those who are called by that name, and call upon it, and yet live in sin. Being a profane hypocritical nation, they are the people of God's wrath; they lie under his wrath, and are likely to be consumed by it. Note, Hypocritical nations are the people of God's wrath: nothing is more offensive to God than dissimulation in religion. See what a change sin made: they that had been God's chosen and hallowed people, above all, were now become the *people of his wrath*. See Amos iii. 2. 2. How mean the character of the Assyrian is, though he appeared very great; he is but the *rod of God's anger*, an instrument God is pleased to make use of for the chastening of his people, that, being thus *chastened of the Lord, they may not be condemned with the world*. Note, The tyrants of the world are but tools of Providence. Men are God's hand, his sword sometimes, to kill and slay, Ps. xvii. 13, 14. At other times, they are his rod to correct. The staff in their hand, wherewith they smite his people, is his indignation; it is his wrath that puts the staff into their hand, and enables them to deal blows at pleasure among such as thought themselves a match for them. Sometimes God makes an idolatrous nation, that serves him not at all, a scourge to an hypocritical nation, that serves him not in sincerity and truth.

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

II. See how the king of Assyria, in his pride, magnified himself as his own master, and pretended to be absolute, and above all control; to act purely according to his own will, and for his own honour. *God ordained him for judgment, even the mighty*

*God established him for correction*, (Hab. i. 12.) to be an instrument of bringing his people to repentance; *howbeit, he means not so, nor does his heart think so, v. 7*. He does not think that he is either God's servant, or Israel's friend; either that he *can* do no more than God will let him, or that he *shall* do no more than God will make to work for the good of his people. God designs to correct his people for, and so to cure them of, their hypocrisy, and bring them nearer to him; but was that Sennacherib's design? No, it was the furthest thing from his thoughts: *he means not so*. Note, 1. The wise God often makes even the sinful passions and projects of men subservient to his own great and holy purposes. 2. When God makes use of men as instruments in his hand to do his work, it is very common for him to mean one thing, and them to mean another; nay, for them to mean the quite contrary to what he intends. What Joseph's brethren designed for hurt, God overruled for good, Gen. i. 20. See Mic. iv. 11, 12. Men have their ends, and God has his, but we are sure the *counsel of the Lord shall stand*. But what is it the proud Assyrian aims at? The heart of kings is unsearchable, but God knew what was in his heart: he designs nothing but to destroy, and to *cut off nations not a few*, and to make himself master of them. (1.) He designs to gratify his own cruelty; nothing will serve but to destroy, and cut off. He hopes to regale himself with blood and slaughter; that of particular persons will not suffice, he must cut off nations. It is below him to deal by retail, he traffics in murder by wholesale; nations, and those not a few, must have but one neck, which he will have the pleasure of cutting off. (2.) He designs to gratify his own covetousness and ambition, to set up for a universal monarch, and to *gather unto him all nations*, Hab. ii. 5. An insatiable desire of wealth and dominion, is that which carries him on in this undertaking.

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

[1.] He boasts what great things he has done to other nations. *First*, He has made their kings his courtiers; (v. 8.) "*My princes are altogether kings*; those that are now my princes, are such as have been kings." Or, he means that he had raised his throne to that degree, that his servants, and those that were in command under him, were as great, and lived in as much pomp, as the kings of other countries. Or, those that were absolute princes in their own dominions, held their crowns under him, and did him homage. This was a vainglorious boast; but how great is our God whom we serve, who is indeed King of kings, and whose subjects are made to him kings! Rev. i. 6. *Secondly*, He has made himself master of their cities: he names several, (v. 9.) that were all alike reduced by him; Calno soon yielded as Carchemish did; Hamath could not hold out any more than Arpad; and Samaria is become his, as well as Damascus. To support his boasts, he is obliged to bring the victories of his predecessor into the account; for it was he that conquered Samaria, not Sennacherib. *Thirdly*, He had been too hard for their idols, their tutelary

gods, and had found out the kingdoms of their idols, and found out ways to make them his own, *v.* 10. Their kingdoms took denominations from the idols they worshipped; the Moabites are called *the people of Chemosh*, (Jer. xlviii. 46.) because they imagined their gods were their patrons and protectors; and therefore Sennacherib vainly imagines that every conquest of a kingdom was the conquest of a god. *Fourthly*, He had enlarged his own dominions, and removed the bounds of the people, (*v.* 13.) enclosing many large territories within the limits of his own kingdom, and shifting a great way further the ancient landmarks which his fathers had set; he could not bear to be hemmed in so close, but must have more room to thrive. By his removing the border of the people, Mr. White understands his arbitrary transplanting of colonies from place to place, which was the constant practice of the Assyrians in all their conquests; this is a probable interpretation. *Fifthly*, He had enriched himself with their wealth, and brought it into his own exchequer; *I have robbed their treasures*. In that, he said truly. Great conquerors are often no better than great robbers. *Lastly*, He had mastered all the opposition he met with; *"I have put down the inhabitants as a valiant man"*: those that sat high, and thought they sat firm, I have humbled, and made to come down."

He boasts, 1. That he had done all this by his own policy and power; (*v.* 13.) *By the strength of my hand*, for I am valiant; and *by my wisdom*, for I am prudent: not by the permission of providence, and the blessing of God: he knows not that it is God that makes him what he is, and puts the staff into his hand, but sacrifices to his own net, Hab. i. 16. It is all gotten by my might, and the power of my hand, Deut. viii. 17. Downright atheism and profaneness, as well as pride and vanity, are at the bottom of men's attributing their prosperity and success thus to themselves and their own conduct, and raising their own character upon it. 2. That he had done all this with a great deal of ease, and had made but a sport and diversion of it, as if he had been taking birds' nests; (*v.* 14.) *My hand has found as a nest the riches of the people*; and when he had found them, there was no more difficulty in taking them than in rifling a nest, nor any more reluctance or regret within his own breast, in destroying families and cities, than in destroying crows' nests: killing children was no more to him than killing birds. "As one gathers the eggs that are left in the nest by the dam, so easily have I gathered all the earth;" (like Alexander, he thought he had conquered the world;) and whatever prey he seized, there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped, as birds do when their nests are rifled; they durst not make any opposition, no, nor any complaint; such awe did they stand in of this mighty conqueror; they were so weak, that they knew it was to no purpose to resist; and he was so arbitrary, that they knew it was to no purpose to complain. Strange! that ever men, who were made to do good, should take a pride and a pleasure in doing wrong, and doing mischief to all about them without control; and should reckon that their glory which is their shame! But their day will come to fall, who thus make themselves the terror of the mighty, and much more of the feeble, in the land of the living.

[2.] He threatens what he will do to Jerusalem, which he was now about to lay siege to, *v.* 10. 11. He would master Jerusalem and her idols, as he had subdued other places and their idols, particularly Samaria. *First*, He blasphemously calls the God of Israel an idol, and sets him on a level with the false gods of other nations, as if none were the true God but Mithras, the sun, whom he worshipped.

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

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

1. He shows the vanity of his insolent and audacious boasts; (*v.* 15.) *Shall the axe boast itself against him that hews therewith?* Or, *Shall the saw magnify itself against him that draws it?* So absurd are the boasts of this proud man. "O what a dust do I make!" said the fly upon the cart-wheel in the fable. "What destruction do I make among the trees!" says the axe. Two ways the axe may be said to boast itself against him that hews with it; (1.) By way of resistance and opposition. Sennacherib blasphemed God, insulted him, threatened to serve him as he had served the gods of the nations; now this was as if the axe should fly in the face of him that hews with it. The tool striving with the workman is no less absurd than the clay striving with the potter: and as it is a thing not to be justified, that men should fight against God with the wit, and wealth, and power, which he gives them, so it is a thing not to be suffered; but if men will be thus proud and daring, and bid defiance to all that is just and sacred, let them expect that God will reckon with them; the more insolent they are, the surer and sorer will their ruin be. (2.) By way of rivalry and competition. Shall the axe take to itself the praise of the work it is employed in? So senseless, so absurd, was it for Sennacherib to say, *By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom*, *v.* 13. It is as if the rod, when it is shaken, should boast that it guides the hand which shakes it; whereas when the staff is lifted up, is it not wood still? So the last clause may be read. If it be an ensign of authority, (as the nobles of the people carried staves, Numb. xxi. 18.) if it be an instrument of service, either to support a weak man, or to correct a bad man, still it is wood, and can do nothing but as it is directed by him that uses it. The psalmist prays that God would make the nations know that they were but men, (Ps. ix. 20.) the staff to know that it is but wood.

2. He foretells his fall and ruin.

(1.) That when God hath done his work by him, he will then do his work upon him, *v.* 12. For the comfort of the people of God, in reference to Sennacherib's invasion, though it was a dismal time with them, let them know, [1.] That God designed to do good in Zion and Jerusalem by his providence; there is a work to be done upon them, which God intends, and which he will perform. Note, When God lets loose the enemies of his church and people, and suffers them for a time to prevail, it is in

order to the performing of some great good work upon them; and when that is done, then, and not till then, he will work deliverance for them. When God brings his people into trouble, it is to try them, (Dan. xi. 35.) to bring sin to their remembrance, and humble them for it, and to awaken them to a sense of their duty, to teach them to pray, and to love and help one another; and *this must be the fruit, even the taking away of sin, ch. xxvii. 9.* When these points are, in some measure, gained by the affliction, it shall be removed in mercy, (Lev. xxvi. 41, 42.) otherwise not; for as the word, so the rod, shall accomplish that for which God sends it. [2.] That when God had wrought this work of grace for his people, he would work a work of wrath and vengeance upon their invaders; *I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria.* His big words are here said to come from his *stout heart*, and they are the fruit of it, for *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*; notice is taken too of the *glory of his high looks*, for a proud look is the indication of a proud spirit. The enemies of the church are commonly very high and haughty; but, sooner or later, God will reckon for that. He glories in it as an incontestable proof of his power and sovereignty, that he *looks upon proud men, and abases them*, Job xl. 11, &c.

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

[1.] Who it is that undertakes his destruction, and will be the Author of it; not Hezekiah, or his princes, or the militia of Judah and Jerusalem; (what can they do against such a potent force?) but God himself will do it, as the Lord of hosts, and as the Light of Israel. *First*, We are sure he *can* do it, for he is the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts of heaven and earth; all the creatures are at his command, he makes what use he pleases of them, and lays what restraints he pleases on them. He is the Lord of the hosts both of Judah and of Assyria, and can give the victory to which he pleases. Let us not fear the hosts of any enemy, if we have the Lord of hosts for us. *Secondly*, We have reason to hope he *will* do it, for he is the Light of Israel, and his Holy One. God is Light; in him are perfect brightness, purity, and happiness. He is Light, for he is the Holy One; his holiness is his glory. He is Israel's Light, to direct and counsel his people, to favour and countenance them, and so to rejoice and comfort them in the worst of times. He is their Holy One, for he is in covenant with them; his holiness is engaged and employed for them. God's holiness is the saints' comfort; they *give thanks at the remembrance of it*, and with a great deal of pleasure call him their *Holy One*, Hab. i. 12.

[2.] How this destruction is represented. It shall be, *First*, As a consumption of the body by a disease; *The Lord shall send leanness among his fatnesses, or his fat ones.* His numerous army, that was like a body covered with fatness, shall be diminished, and waste away, and become like a skeleton. *Secondly*, as a consumption of buildings, or trees and bushes, by fire; Under his glory, that very thing which he glories in, he will *kindle a burning, as the burning of a fire*, which shall lay his army in ruins, as suddenly as a raging fire lays a stately house in ashes. Some make it an allusion to the fire kindled under the sacrifices, for proud sinners fall as sacrifices to divine justice. Observe, 1. How this fire shall be kindled, v. 17. The same God that is a rejoicing Light to them that serve him faithfully, will be a consuming Fire to them that trifle with him, or rebel against him; the Light of Israel shall be a Fire to the Assyrians, as the same pillar of

cloud was a light to the Israelites, and a terror to the Egyptians, in the Red sea. What can oppose what can extinguish, such a fire? 2. What desolation it shall make; *It shall burn and devour its thorns and briers*, his officers and soldiers, which are of little worth, and vexations to God's Israel, as thorns and briers, whose end is to be burned, and which are easily and quickly consumed by a devouring fire; (ch. xxvii. 4.) *Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle?* They will be so far from stopping the fire, that they will inflame it; *I would go through them and burn them together*; they shall be devoured in one day, all cut off in an instant. When they cried not only Peace and safety, but Victory and triumph, then sudden destruction came; it came surprisingly, and was completed in a little time. Even *the glory of his forest*, (v. 18.) the choice troops of his army, the veterans, the troops of the household, the bravest regiments he had, that he was most proud of, and depended most upon, that he values, as men do their timber-trees, the glory of their forest, or their fruit-trees, the glory of their Carmel; those shall be put as briers and thorns before the fire; they shall be consumed both soul and body, entirely consumed, not only a limb burned, but life taken away. Note, God is able to destroy both soul and body, and therefore we should fear him more than man, who can but kill the body; great armies before him are but as great woods, which he can fell or fire when he pleases.

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

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

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

1. The conversion of some, to whom this providence should be sanctified, and yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, though for the present it was not jovous, but grievous; these are but a *remnant*; (v. 22.) the *remnant of Israel*, (v. 20.) the *remnant of Jacob*, (v. 21.) but a very few in comparison with



the vast numbers of the people of Israel, which were as the sand of the sea. Note, Converting-work is wrought but on a remnant, who are distinguished from the rest, and set apart for God. When we see how populous Israel is, how numerous the members of the visible church are, as the sand of the sea, and yet consider that of those a remnant only shall be saved, that of the many that are called there are but few chosen, we shall surely *strive to enter in at the strait gate*, and fear lest we *seem to come short*. The remnant of Israel are said to be such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, such as escaped the corruptions of the house of Jacob, and kept their integrity in times of common apostacy; and that was a fair escape. And therefore they escape the desolations of that house, and shall be preserved in safety, in times of common calamity; and that also will be a fair and narrow escape. *Their lives shall be given them for a prey*; (Jer. xlv. 5.) *the righteous scarcely are saved*.

Now, (1.) This remnant shall come off from all confidence in an arm of flesh, this providence shall cure them of that; they shall *no more again stay upon him that smote them*, shall never depend upon the Assyrians, as they have done, for help against their other enemies, finding that they are themselves their worst enemies; *Ictus piscator sapit—Sufferings teach caution*. They have now learned, by dear-bought experience, the folly of leaning upon that staff as a stay to them, which may perhaps prove a staff to beat them; it is a part of the covenant of a returning people, (Hos. xiv. 3.) *Assyria shall not save us*. Note, By our afflictions we may learn not to make creatures our confidence.

(2.) They shall come home to God, to the mighty God, (one of the names given to the Messiah, ch. ix. 6.) to the *Holy One of Israel*. The remnant shall return; (that was signified by the name of the prophet's son, *Shear-jashub*, ch. vii. 3.) even the remnant of Jacob; they shall return after the raising of the siege of Jerusalem, not only to the quiet possession of their houses and lands, but to God and to their duty; they shall repent and pray, and seek his face, and reform their lives. The remnant that escape, are a returning remnant; they shall return to God, and shall stay upon him. Note, Those only may with comfort stay upon God, that return to him; then may we have a humble confidence in God, when we make conscience of our duty to him. They shall *stay upon the Holy One of Israel, in truth*, and not in pretence and profession only. This promise of the conversion and salvation of a remnant of Israel now, is applied by the apostle, (Rom. ix. 27.) to the remnant of the Jews, which, at the first preaching of the gospel, received and entertained it: and sufficiently proves, that it was no new thing for God to abandon to ruin a great many of the seed of Abraham, and yet preserve his promise to Abraham in full force and virtue; for so it was now. *The number of the children of Israel was as the sand of the sea*, (according to the promise, Gen. xxii. 17.) and yet only a remnant shall be saved.

2. The consumption of others; *The Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption*; (v. 23.) this is not meant (as that v. 18.) of the consumption of the Assyrian army, but of the consumption of the estates and families of many of the Jews by the Assyrian army. This is taken notice of, to magnify the power and goodness of God in the escape of the distinguished remnant, and to let us know what shall become of those that will not return to God; they shall be wasted away by this consumption, this general decay *in the midst of the land*. Observe, (1.) It is a consumption of God's own making; he is the author of it; the Lord God of hosts, whom none can resist, he shall make this consumption. (2.) It is decreed, it is not the product of a sudden resolve, but

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

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

The prophet, in his preaching, distinguishes between the precious and the vile; for God, in his providence, even in the same providence, does so; he speaks terror, in Sennacherib's invasion, to the hypocrites, who were the *people of God's wrath*, v. 6. But here he speaks comfort to the sincere, who were the people of God's love. The judgment was sent for the sake of the former, the deliverance was wrought for the sake of the latter. Here we have.

I. An exhortation to God's people, not to be frightened at this threatening calamity, nor to be put into any confusion or consternation by it; (v. 24.) *Let the sinners in Zion be afraid*, ch. xxxiii. 14. *O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian*. Note, It is against the mind and will of God, that his people, whatever happens

shall give way to that fear which has torment and amazement. They that dwell in Zion, where God dwells, and where his people attend him, and are employed in his service, that are under the protection of the bulwarks that are *round about Zion*, (Ps. xlviii. 13.) need not be afraid of any enemy. Let their souls dwell at ease in God.

II. Considerations offered for the silencing of their fear.

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

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

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

4. They shall be wholly delivered from the power of the Assyrian, and from the fear of it; (v. 27.) they shall not only be eased of the Assyrian army, which now quartered upon them, and which was a grievous yoke and burthen to them, but they shall no more pay that tribute to the king of Assyria, which, before this invasion, he had exacted from

them, (2 Kings xviii. 14.) shall be no longer at his service, nor lie at his mercy, as they have done; nor shall he ever again put the country under contribution. Some think it looks further, to the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon; and further yet, to the redemption of believers from the tyranny of sin and Satan. The yoke shall not only be taken away, but it shall be destroyed; the enemy shall no more recover his strength, to do the mischief he has done. And this, *because of the anointing*, for their sakes, who were partakers of the anointing. (1.) For Hezekiah's sake, who was the anointed of the Lord, who had been an active reformer, and was dear to God. (2.) For David's sake; that is particularly given them as the reason why God would defend Jerusalem from Sennacherib, (ch. xxxvii. 35.) *For my own sake, and for my servant David's sake*. (3.) For his people Israel's sake, the good people among them that had received the unction of divine grace. (4.) For the sake of the Messiah, the Anointed of God, whom God had an eye to in all the deliverances of the Old Testament church, and hath still an eye to in all the favours he shows to his people; it is for his sake that the yoke is broken, and that we are made free indeed.

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

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

2. How cowardly the men of Judah were, the degenerate seed of that lion's whelp; they are afraid, they are fled upon the first alarm, and did not offer to make any head against the enemy; their apostacy from God had dispirited them, so that one chases a thousand of them. Instead of a valiant shout, to animate one another, nothing was heard but lamentation, to discourage and weaken one another. And poor Anathoth, a priest's city, that should have been a pattern of courage, shrieks louder than any; (v. 30.) with respect to those that gathered themselves together, it was not to fight, but to flee by consent, v. 31. This is designed either, (1.) To show how fast the news of the enemies progress flew through the kingdom; *He is come to Aiath*, says one; nay, says another, *He is passed to Migron*, &c. And yet, perhaps, it was not altogether so bad as common fame represented it. But we must watch against the fear, not only of evil things, but of evil tidings, which often make things worse than really they are, Ps. cxii. 7. Or, (2.) To show what imminent danger Jerusalem was in, when its enemies made so many bold advances towards it, and its friends could not make one hold stand to defend it. Note, The more daring the church's enemies are, and the more dastardly those are that should appear for her, the more will God be exalted in his own strength, when, notwithstanding this, he works deliverance for her.

3. How impotent his attempt upon Jerusalem shall be; *He shall remain at Nob*, whence he may see mount Zion, and there he shall shake his hand against it; (v. 32.) he shall threaten it, and that shall

be all; it shall be safe, and shall set him at defiance; the daughter of Jerusalem, to be even with him, shall *shake her head* at him, *ch. xxxvii. 22.*

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

## CHAP. XI.

It is a very good transition in prophecy, (whether it be so in rhetoric or no,) and a very common one, to pass from the prediction of the temporal deliverances of the church to that of the great salvation, which in the fulness of time shall be wrought out by Jesus Christ, of which the other were types and figures to which all the prophets bare witness; and so the ancient Jews understand them. For what else was it that raised so great an expectation of the Messiah at the time he came. Upon occasion of the prophecy of the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, here comes in a prophecy concerning Messiah the Prince: I. His rise out of the house of David, *v. 1.* II. His qualifications for his great undertaking, *v. 2, 3.* III. The justice and equity of his government, *v. 3, 4.* IV. The peaceableness of his kingdom, *v. 6, 7, 9.* V. The accession of the Gentiles to it, (*v. 10.*) and with them the remnant of the Jews, that should be united with them in the Messiah's kingdom, *v. 11, 16.* And of all this, God would now shortly give them a type, and some dark representation, in the excellent government of Hezekiah, the great peace which the nation should enjoy under him, after the ruin of Sennacherib's design, and the return of many of the ten tribes out of their dispersion to their brethren of the land of Judah, when they enjoyed that great tranquillity.

1. **A**ND there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: 2. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord; 3. And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears. 4. But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. 5. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. 6. The wolf

also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. 7. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. 9. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

The prophet had before, in this sermon, spoken of a Child that should be born, a Son that should be given, on whose shoulders the government should be; intending this for the comfort of the people of God in times of trouble, as dying Jacob, many ages before, had intended the prospect of Shiloh for the comfort of his seed in their affliction in Egypt. He had said, (*ch. x. 27.*) that *the yoke should be destroyed because of the anointing*; now here he tells us on whom that anointing should rest. He foretells,

I. That the Messiah should, in due time, arise out of the house of David, as that Branch of the Lord, which he had said (*ch. iv. 2.*) should be excellent and glorious; the word is *Netzer*, which some think is referred to, *Matth. ii. 23.* where it is said to be spoken by the prophets of the Messiah, that he *should be called a Nazarene*. Observe here,

1. Whence this Branch should arise: from Jesse. He should be the Son of David, with whom the covenant of royalty was made, and to whom it was promised with an oath, that *of the fruit of his loins God would raise up Christ*, *Acts ii. 30.* David is often called the *son of Jesse*, and Christ is called so, because he was to be not only the Son of David, but David himself, *Hos. iii. 5.*

2. The meanness of his appearance. (1.) He is called a *Rod*, and a *Branch*; both the words here used signify a weak, small, tender product, a *twig*, and a *spring*; so some render them; such as is easily broken off. The enemies of God's church were just before compared to strong and stately boughs, (*ch. x. 33.*) which will not, without great labour, be hewn down; but Christ, to a tender branch; (*ch. liii. 2.*) yet he shall be victorious over them. (2.) He is said to come out of *Jesse*, rather than *David*, because Jesse lived and died in meanness and obscurity; his family was of small account, (*1 Sam. xviii. 18.*) and it was in a way of contempt and reproach that David was sometimes called the *son of Jesse*, *ch. xxii. 7.* (3.) He comes forth out of the *stem*, or stump, of Jesse; when the royal family that had been as a cedar, was cut down, and only the stump of it left, almost levelled with the ground, and lost in the grass of the field, (*Dan. iv. 15.*) yet it shall sprout again, *Job xiv. 7.* Nay, it shall grow out of his *roots*, which are quite buried in the earth, and, like the roots of flowers in the winter, have no stem appearing above ground. The house of David was reduced and brought very low at the time of Christ's birth, witness the obscurity and poverty of Joseph and Mary. The Messiah was thus to begin his estate of humiliation, for submitting to which he should be highly exalted, and would thus give early notice that his kingdom was not of this world. The Chaldee Paraphrase reads this, *There shall come forth a king from the sons of Jesse, and the Messiah (or Christ) shall be anointed out of his sons' sons.*

II. That he should be every way qualified for that great work to which he was designed; that this

tender Branch should be so watered with the dews of heaven, as to become *a strong Rod for a sceptre to rule*, v. 2.

1. In general; the *Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him*. The Holy Spirit, in all his gifts and graces, shall not only come, but rest and abide, upon him; he shall have the Spirit not by measure, but without measure, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him. Col. i. 19.—ii. 9. He began his preaching with this, (Luke iv. 18.) *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me*.

2. In particular; the spirit of government, by which he should be every way fitted for that judgment which the Father has committed to him, and given him authority to execute, John v. 22, 27. And not only so, but he should be made the Fountain and Treasury of all grace to believers, that from his fulness they might all receive the Spirit of grace, as all the members of the body derive animal spirits from the head. (1.) He shall have the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and knowledge; he shall thoroughly understand the business he is to be employed in. *No man knows the Father but the Son*, Matth. xi. 27. What he is to make known to the children of men concerning God, and his mind and will, he shall be himself acquainted with and apprised of, John i. 18. He shall know how to administer his spiritual kingdom in all the branches of it, so as effectually to answer the two great intentions of it, the glory of God, and the welfare of the children of men. The terms of the covenant shall be settled by him, and ordinances instituted, in wisdom: treasures of wisdom shall be in him; he shall be our Counsellor, and shall be made of God to us Wisdom. (2.) The spirit of courage, or might, or fortitude; the undertaking was very great, abundance of difficulty must be broken through, and therefore it was necessary that he should be so endowed that he *might not fail, or be discouraged*, ch. xlii. 1. He was famed for courage in his teaching the way of God in truth, and not caring for any man, Matth. xxii. 16. (3.) The Spirit of religion, or the fear of the Lord; not only he shall himself have a reverent affection for his Father, as his servant, (ch. xlii. 1.) and he was heard in *that he feared*, (Heb. v. 7.) but he shall have a zeal for religion, and shall design the advancement of it in his whole undertaking. Our faith in Christ was never designed to supersede and jumble out, but to increase and support, our fear of the Lord.

III. That he should be accurate and critical, and very exact in the administration of his government, and the exercise of the power committed to him; (v. 3.) *The Spirit wherewith he shall be clothed, shall make him of quick understanding, in the fear of the Lord*; of an acute smell or scent, so the word is, for the apprehensions of the mind are often expressed by the sensations of the body. Note, 1. Those are most truly and valuably intelligent, that are so in the fear of the Lord, in the business of religion, for that is both the foundation and top-stone of wisdom. 2. By this it will appear that we have the Spirit of God, if we have spiritual senses exercised, and are of *quick understanding, in the fear of the Lord*; those have divine illumination, that know their duty, and know how to go about it. (3.) Therefore, Jesus Christ had the Spirit without measure, that he might perfectly understand his undertaking; and he did so, as appears not only in the admirable answers he gave to all that questioned with him, which proved him to be of *quick understanding, in the fear of the Lord*; but in the management of his whole undertaking. He has settled the great affair of religion so unexceptionably well, (so as effectually to secure both God's honour and man's happiness,) that it must be owned, he thoroughly understood it.

IV. That he should be just and righteous in all the acts of his government, and there should appear in it as much equity as wisdom. He shall judge, as he expresses it himself, and as he himself would be judged of, John vii. 24.

1. Not according to outward appearance; (v. 3.) *He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes*, with respect of persons, (Job xxxiv. 19.) and according to outward shows and appearances, nor *reprove after the hearing of his ears*, by common fame and report, and the representations of others, as men oft do; nor does he judge of men by the fair words they speak, *calling him Lord, Lord*, or their plausible actions before the eye of the world, which they do to be seen of men; but he will judge by the hidden man of the heart, and the inward principles men are governed by, of which he is an infallible Witness. Christ will judge the secrets of men; (Rom. ii. 16.) will determine concerning them, not according to their own pretensions and appearances, that were to *judge after the sight of the eyes*; not according to the opinion others have of them, that were to judge after the hearing of the ears; but we are sure that *his judgment is according to truth*.

2. He will judge righteous judgment; (v. 5.) *Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins*; he shall be righteous in the administration of his government, and his righteousness shall be his girdle, it shall constantly compass him and cleave to him, it shall be his ornament and honour; he shall gird himself for every action, shall gird on his sword for war in righteousness; his righteousness shall be his strength, and shall make him expeditious in his undertakings, as a man with his loins girt. In conformity to Christ, his followers must have the girdle of truth, (Eph. vi. 14.) and it will be the stability of the times. Particularly,

(1.) He shall in righteousness plead for the people that are poor and oppressed; he will be their Protector; (v. 4.) *with righteousness shall he judge the poor*, shall judge in favour and defence of these that have right on their side, though they are poor in the world, and because they are poor in spirit. It is the duty of princes to defend and deliver the poor, (Ps. lxxxii. 3, 4.) and the honour of Christ, that he is the poor man's King, Ps. lxxii. 2, 4. He shall *debate with evenness for the meek of the earth*, or of the land; those that bear the injuries done them, with meekness and patience, are in a special manner entitled to the divine care and protection. *I, as a deaf man, heard not, for thou wilt hear*, Ps. xxxviii. 13, 14. Some read it, *He shall reprove or correct the meek of the earth with equity*. If his own people, the meek of the land, do amiss, he will visit their transgression with the rod.

(2.) He shall in righteousness plead against his enemies that are proud and oppressors; (v. 4.) *But he shall smite the earth*, the man of the earth, that oppresses; (see Ps. x. 18.) *the men of the world*, that *mind earthly things* only; (Ps. xvii. 14.) these he shall smite with the rod of his mouth, the word of his mouth, speaking terror and ruin to them; his threatenings shall take hold of them, and be executed upon them; *with the breath of his lips*, by the operation of his Spirit, according to his word, and working with and by it, he shall *slay the wicked*. He will do it easily, with a word's speaking, as he laid those flat who came to seize him, by saying, *I am he*, John xviii. 6. Killing terrors shall arrest their consciences, killing judgments shall ruin them, their power, and all their interests; and in the other world everlasting tribulation will be recompensed to those that trouble his poor people. The apostle applies this to the destruction of the man of sin, whom he calls *that wicked one*, (2 Thes. ii. 8.) *whom the Lord will consume with the spirit of his mouth*. And the Chaldee here reads it, *He shall slay that*

*wicked Romulus,\** or Rome, as Mr. Hugh Broughton understands it.

V. That there should be great peace and tranquillity under his government; this is an explication of what was said, *ch. ix. 6.* that he should be the Prince of Peace. Peace signifies two things:

1. Unity and concord; these are intimated in these figurative promises, that even *the wolf shall dwell peaceably with the lamb*; men of the most fierce and furious dispositions, who used to bite and devour all about them, shall have their temper so strangely altered by the efficacy of the gospel and grace of Christ, that they shall live in love even with the weakest, and such as formerly they would have made an easy prey of. So far shall the sheep be from hurting one another, as sometimes they have done, (*Ezek. xxxiv. 20, 21.*) that even the wolves shall agree with them. Christ, who is our Peace, came to slay all enmities, and to settle lasting friendships among his followers, particularly between Jews and Gentiles: when multitudes of both, being converted to the faith of Christ, united in one sheep-fold; then the wolf and the lamb dwelt together; the wolf did not so much as threaten the lamb, nor was the lamb afraid of the wolf. The leopard shall not only not tear the kid, but shall lie down with her: even their young ones shall lie down together, and shall be trained up in a blessed amity, in order to the perpetuating of it. The lion shall cease to be ravenous, and shall *eat straw like the ox*, as some think all the beasts of prey did before the Fall. The asp and the cockatrice shall cease to be venomous, so that parents will let their children play with them, and put their hands among them. A generation of vipers shall become a seed of saints, and the old complaint of *Homo homini lupus—Man is a wolf to man*, shall be at an end. They that inhabit the holy mountain, shall live as amicably as the creatures did that were with Noah in the ark, and it shall be a means of their preservation, for they shall not hurt or destroy one another as they have done. Now, (1.) This is fulfilled in the wonderful effect of the gospel upon the minds of those that sincerely embrace it; it changes the nature and makes those that trampled on the meek of the earth, not only meek like them, but kind to them. When Paul, who had persecuted the saints, joined himself to them, then *the wolf dwelt with the lamb*. (2.) Some are willing to hope it shall yet have a further accomplishment in the latter days, when *swords shall be beaten into ploughshares*.

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

*Lastly*, Observe what shall be the effect, and what the cause, of this wonderful softening and sweetening of men's tempers by the grace of God.

1. The effect of it shall be, tractableness, and a willingness to receive instruction; *A little child shall lead them* who formerly scorned to be controlled by the strongest man. Calvin understands it of their willing submission to the ministers of Christ,

\* *Arallum.*—Ed.

who are to instruct with meekness, and not to use any coercive power, but to be as *little children*, Matt. xviii. 3. See 2 Cor. viii. 5.

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

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

We have here a further prophecy of the enlargement and advancement of the kingdom of the Messiah, under the type and figure of the flourishing condition of the kingdom of Judah in the latter end of Hezekiah's reign, after the defeat of Sennacherib.

1. This prediction was in part accomplished when the great things God did for Hezekiah and his people, proved as an ensign, inviting the neighbouring nations to them, *to inquire of the wonders*

*done in the land*, on which errand the king of Babylon's ambassadors came. To them the Gentiles sought; and Jerusalem, the rest or habitation of the Jews, was then glorious, *v.* 10. Then many of the Israelites who belonged to the kingdom of the ten tribes, who, upon the destruction of that kingdom by the king of Assyria, were forced to flee for shelter into all the countries about, and to some that lay very remote, even to the islands of the sea, were encouraged to return to their own country, and put themselves under the protection and government of the king of Judah; the rather, because it was an Assyrian army by which their country had been ruined, and that was now routed. This is said to be a recovery of them *the second time*, (*v.* 11.) such an instance of the power and goodness of God, and such a reviving to them, as their first deliverance out of Egypt was. Then the *outcasts of Israel* should be gathered in, and brought home, and those of Judah too, who, upon the approach of the Assyrian army, shifted for their own safety. Then the old feud between Ephraim and Judah shall be forgotten, and they shall join against the Philistines and their other common enemies, *v.* 13, 14. Note, Those who have been sharers with each other in afflictions and mercies, dangers and deliverances, in consideration thereof, ought to unite for their joint and mutual safety and protection; and then it is likely to be well with the church, when Ephraim and Judah are one against the Philistines. Then, whatever difficulties there may be in the way of the return of the dispersed, the Lord shall find out some way or other to remove them; as, when he brought Israel out of Egypt, he dried up the Red sea and Jordan, (*v.* 15.) and led them to Canaan through the invincible embarrassments of a vast howling wilderness, *v.* 16. The like will he do this second time, or that which shall be equivalent; when God's time is come for the deliverance of his people, mountains of opposition shall become plain before him. Let us not despair, therefore, when the interests of the church seem to be brought very low; God can soon turn gloomy days into glorious ones.

II. It had a further reference to the days of the Messiah, and the accession of the Gentiles to his kingdom; for to that the apostle applies, *v.* 10, of which the following verses are a continuation. Rom. xv. 12. *There shall be a root of Jesse; and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust.* That is a key to this prophecy, which speaks of Christ as the Root of Jesse, a branch out of his roots, (*v.* 1.) *a root out of a dry ground*, *ch.* liii. 2. He is the *Root of David*, (*Rev.* v. 5.) the *Root and Offspring of David*, *Rev.* xxii. 16.

1. He shall stand, or be set up, for an *Ensign of the people*; when he was crucified, he was *lifted up from the earth*; that, as an Ensign or Beacon, he might draw the eyes and hearts of *all men unto him*, John xii. 32. He is set up as an Ensign in the preaching of the everlasting gospel, in which the ministers, as standard-bearers, display the banner of his love, to allure us to him, (*Cant.* i. 4.) the banner of his truth, under which we may enlist ourselves to engage in a holy war against sin and Satan. Christ is the ensign to whom the *children of God that were scattered abroad, are gathered together*, (John xi. 52.) and in whom they meet as the Centre of their unity.

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

they shall seek to him with a dependence on him.

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

4. Both Jews and Gentiles shall be gathered to him, *v.* 11. A remnant of both, a little remnant in comparison, which shall be recovered, as it were, with great difficulty and hazard. As formerly God delivered his people, and gathered them out of all the countries whither they were scattered, (Ps. cvi. 47, Jer. xvi. 15, 16.) so he will a second time, in another way, by the powerful working of the Spirit of grace with the word. He shall set his hand to do it; he shall exert his power, *the arm of the Lord shall be revealed* to do it. 1. There shall be a remnant of the Jews gathered in. *The outcasts of Israel, and the dispersed of Judah*, (*v.* 12.) many of whom, at the time of the bringing of them in to Christ, were *Jews of the dispersion, the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad*, (James i. 1. 1 Pet. i. 1.) these shall flock to Christ; and, probably, more of those scattered Jews were brought into the church, in proportion, than those which remained in their own land. (2.) Many of the nations, the Gentiles, shall be brought in by the lifting up of the ensign. Jacob foretold concerning Shileh, that *to him shall the gathering of the people be*. Those that were strangers and foreigners, shall be made nigh. The Jews were jealous of Christ's going to the dispersed among the Gentiles, and of his *teaching the Gentiles*, John vii. 35.

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

Lastly, Every thing that might hinder the progress and success of the gospel, shall be taken out of the way. As when God brought Israel out of Egypt, he dried up the Red sea and Jordan before them, (*ch.* lxi. 11, 12.) and as afterward when he brought up the Jews out of Babylon, he prepared them their way; (*ch.* lxi. 10.) so when Jews and Gentiles are to be brought together into the gospel-church, all obstructions shall be removed, (*v.* 15, 16.) difficulties that seemed insuperable shall be strangely got over; *the blind shall be led by a way that they knew not*. See *ch.* xlii. 15, 16.—xliii. 19, 20. Converts shall be brought in chariots and in litters, *ch.* lxi. 20. Some think it is the further accession of multitudes to the church, that is pointed at in that obscure prophecy of the drying up of the river Euphrates, that the way of the kings of the east may be prepared, (*Rev.* xvi. 12.) which seems to refer to this here. Note, When God's time is come for the bringing of nations, or par-



ticular persons, home to himself, divine grace will be victorious over all opposition. At the presence of the Lord, the sea shall flee, and Jordan be driven back; and those who set their faces heaven-ward will find there are not such difficulties in the way as they thought there were, for there is a highway thither, *ch.* xxxv. 8.

## CHAP. XII.

The salvation promised in the foregoing chapter was compared to that of Israel, *in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt*; so that chapter ends. Now as Moses and the children of Israel sang a song of praise, to the glory of God, (*Exod.* xv. 1.) so shall the people of God do in that day, when the Root of Jesse shall stand for an Ensign of the people, and shall be the Desire and Joy of all nations. In that day, 1. Every particular believer shall sing a song of praise for his own interest in that salvation; (*v.* 1. 3.) *Thou shalt say, Lord, I will praise thee*: thanksgiving-work shall be closet-work. 2. Many in concert shall join in praising God for the common benefit arising from this salvation; (*v.* 4. 6.) *Ye shall say, praise ye the Lord*: thanksgiving-work shall be congregation-work; and the praises of God shall be publicly sung in the congregations of the upright.

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

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

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

2. “Thou shalt have a heart to say so.” All God’s other gifts to his people shall be crowned with this; he will give them grace to ascribe all the glory of them to him, and to speak of them upon all occasions, with thankfulness to his praise. *Thou shalt say*, thou oughtest to say so. *In that day*, when many are brought home to Jesus Christ, and flock to him as doves to their windows, instead of envying the kind reception they find with Christ, as the Jews grudged the favour shown to the Gentiles, *thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee*. Note, We ought to rejoice in, and give thanks for, the grace of God to others as well as to ourselves.

1. Believers are here taught to give thanks to God for the turning away of his displeasure from them, and the return of his favour to them; (*v.* 1.)

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

2. They are taught to triumph in God, and their interest in him; (*v.* 2.) “Behold, and wonder; God is my salvation; not only my Saviour, by whom I am saved, but my Salvation, in whom I am safe. I depend upon him as my Salvation, for I have found him to be so. He shall have the glory of all the salvations that have been wrought for me, and from him only will I expect the salvations I further need, and not from hills and mountains: and if God be my Salvation, if he undertake my eternal salvation, I will trust in him to prepare me for it, and preserve me to it. I will trust him with my temporal concerns, not doubting but he will make all to work for my good. I will be confident, I will be always easy in my own mind.” Note, Those that have God for their Salvation, may enjoy themselves with a holy security and serenity of mind; let faith in God, as our Salvation, be effectual. (1.) To silence our fears; we must trust, and not be afraid; not be afraid that the God we trust in will fail us; no, there is no danger of that; not be afraid of any creature, though ever so formidable and threatening. Note, Faith in God is a sovereign remedy against disquieting, tormenting fears. (2.) To support our hopes. Is the Lord Jehovah our Salvation? Then he will be our Strength and Song. We have work to do and temptations to resist, we may depend upon him to enable us for both; *to strengthen us with all might by his Spirit in the inner man*, for he is our strength; his grace is so, and that grace shall be sufficient for us. We have many troubles to undergo, and must expect griefs in a vale of tears; and we may depend upon him to comfort us in all our tribulations, for he is our Song, *he giveth songs in the night*. If we make God our strength, and put our confidence in him, he will be our strength; if we make him our Song, and place our comfort in him, he will be our Song. Many good Christians have God for their Strength, who have him not for their Song; they walk in darkness, but light is sown for them: and they that have God for their Strength, ought to make him their Song, that is, to give him the glory of it, (*see Ps.* lxxviii. 35.) and to take to themselves the comfort of it, for he will become their Salvation. Observe the title here given to God, *Jah, Jehovah*; Jah is the contraction of Jehovah, and both signify his eternity and unchangeableness; which

are a great comfort to those that depend upon him as their Strength and their Song. Some make Jah to signify the Son of God made man; he is Jehovah, and in him we may glory as our Strength, and Song, and Salvation.

3. They are taught to derive comfort to themselves from the love of God, and all the tokens of that love; (v. 3.) “*Therefore, because the Lord Jehovah is your Strength and Song, and will be your Salvation, you shall draw water with joy.*” Note, The assurances God has given us of his love, and the experiences we have had of the benefit and comfort of his grace, should greatly encourage our faith in him and our expectations from him; “*Out of the wells of Salvation in God, who is the Fountain of all good to his people, you shall draw water with joy.*” God’s favour shall flow forth to you, and you shall have the comfort of it, and make use of the blessed fruits of it.” Note, (1.) God’s promises revealed, ratified, and given out to us, in his ordinances, are wells of salvation; wells of the Saviour, so some read it; for in them the Saviour and salvation are made known to us, and made over to us. (2.) It is our duty by faith to draw water out of these wells, to take to ourselves the benefit and comfort that are treasured up for us in them, as those that acknowledge all our fresh springs to be there, and all our fresh streams to be thence, Ps. lxxxvii. 7. (3.) Water is to be drawn out of the wells of salvation with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction. It is the will of God that we should rejoice before him, and rejoice in him, (Deut. xxvi. 11.) be joyful in his house of prayer, (Isa. lvi. 7.) and keep his feasts with gladness, Acts ii. 46.

4. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. 5. Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. 6. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

This is the second part of this evangelical song, and to the same purport with the former; there believers stir up themselves to praise God; here they invite and encourage one another to do it, and are contriving to spread his praise, and draw in others to join with them in it. Observe,

1. Who are here called upon to praise God; the inhabitants of Zion and Jerusalem, whom God had in a particular manner protected from Sennacherib’s violence, v. 6. Those that have received distinguishing favours from God, ought to be most forward and zealous in praising him. The gospel-church is Zion, Christ is Zion’s King; those that have a place and a name in that, should lay out themselves to diffuse the knowledge of Christ, and to bring many to him. *Thou inhabitress of Zion*; the word is feminine; Let the weaker sex be strong in the Lord, and out of their mouth shall praise be perfected.

2. How they must praise the Lord: (1.) By prayer we must call upon his name: as giving thanks for former mercy is a decent way of begging further mercy, so begging further mercy is graciously accepted as a thankful acknowledgment of the mercies we have received. In calling upon God’s name we give unto him some of the glory that is due to his name as our powerful and bountiful Benefactor. (2.) By preaching and writing we must not only speak to God, but speak to others concerning him; not only call upon his name, but (as the margin

reads it) *proclaim his name*; let others know something more from us than they did before, concerning God, and those things whereby he has made himself known. *Declare his doings, his counsel*; so some read it; the work of redemption is according to the counsel of his will; and in that and other wonderful works that he has done, we must take notice of his *thoughts which are to us-ward*, Ps. xl. 5. Declare these among the people, among the heathen, that they may be brought into communion with Israel and the God of Israel. When the apostles preached the gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, then this scripture was fulfilled, that his doing should be declared among the people, and that what he has done should be known in all the earth. (3.) By a holy exultation and transport of joy, “*Cry out and shout, welcome the gospel to yourselves, and publish it to others with huzzas and loud acclamations, as those that shout for victory, (Exod. xxxii. 18.) or for the coronation of a king,*” Numb. xxiii. 21.

3. For what they must praise the Lord; (1.) Because he has glorified himself. Remember it yourselves, and make mention of it to others, that his name is exalted, is become more illustrious and more conspicuous; in this every good man rejoices. (2.) Because he has magnified his people; he has done excellent things for them, which make them look great and considerable. (3.) Because he is, and will be, great among them; great is the Holy One, for he is glorious in holiness; *therefore* great because holy; true goodness is true greatness; great as *the Holy One of Israel, and in the midst of them*; praised by them, (Ps. lxxvi. 1.) manifesting himself among them, and appearing gloriously in their behalf. It is the honour and happiness of Israel, that the God who is in covenant with them, and in the midst of them, is infinitely great.

## CHAP. XIII.

Hitherto, the prophecies of this book related only to Judah and Israel, and Jerusalem especially; but now the prophet begins to look abroad, and to read the doom of divers of the neighbouring states and kingdoms; for he that is King of saints, is also King of nations, and ruler in the affairs of the children of men as well as in those of his own children. But the nations to whom these prophecies do relate, were all such as the people of God were some way or other conversant and concerned with; such as had been kind or unkind to Israel, and accordingly God would deal with them, either in favour or in wrath; for the Lord’s portion is his people, and to them he has an eye in all the dispensations of his providence concerning those about them, *Deut. xxxii. 8, 9.* The threatenings we find here, against Babylon, Moab, Damascus, Egypt, Tyre, &c. were intended for comfort to those in Israel that feared God, but were terrified and oppressed by those potent neighbours, and for alarm to those among them that were wicked. If God would thus severely reckon with those for their sins that know him not, and made no profession of his name, how severe would he be with those that were called by his name, and yet live in rebellion against him! And perhaps the directing of particular prophecies to the neighbouring nations, might invite some of those nations to the reading of the Jews’ Bible, and so they might be brought to their religion. This chapter, and that which follows, contain what God had to say to Babylon and Babylon’s king, who were at present little known to Israel, but would in process of time become a greater enemy to them than any other had been, for which God would at last reckon with them. In this chapter, we have, I. A general rendezvous of the forces that were to be employed against Babylon, v. 1. 5. II. The dreadful bloody work that those forces should make in Babylon, v. 6. 18. III. The utter ruin and desolation of Babylon, which this should end in, v. 19. 22.

1. **T**HE burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see. 2. Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain,

exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles. 3. I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, *even* them that rejoice in my highness. 4. The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the LORD of hosts mustereth the host of the battle. 5. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, *even* the LORD, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.

The general title of this book was, *The visions of Isaiah the son of Amoz, ch. i. 1.* This is that which Isaiah did see, which was represented to his mind as clearly and fully as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes: but the particular inscription of this sermon, is, *the burthen of Babylon: 1.* It is a burthen, a lesson they were to learn; so some understand it; but they would be loath to learn it, and it would be a burthen to their memories, or a load which should lie heavy upon them, and under which they should sink. Those that will not make the word of God their rest, (*ch. xxviii. 12.* Jer. vi. 16.) it shall be made a burthen to them. 2. It is the burthen of Babylon or Babel, which at this time was a dependent upon the Assyrian monarchy, (the metropolis of which was Nineveh,) but soon after revolted from it, and became a monarchy of itself, and a very potent one, in Nebuchadnezzar. This prophet afterward foretold the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, *ch. xxxix. 6.* Here he foretells the reprisals God would make upon Babylon for the wrongs done to his people.

In these verses a summons is given to those powerful and warlike nations, whom God would make use of as the instruments of his wrath for the destruction of Babylon: he afterward names them (*v. 17.*) the *Medes*, who, in conjunction with the Persians under the command of Darius and Cyrus, were the ruin of the Babylonian monarchy.

1. The place doomed to destruction is Babylon; it is here called *the gates of the nobles*, (*v. 2.*) because in the abundance of noblemen's houses that were in it; stately ones, and richly furnished, which would invite the enemy to come, in hopes of a rich booty. The gates of nobles were strong and well guarded, and yet they would be no fence against those who came with commission to execute God's judgments. Before his power and wrath, palaces are no more than cottages; nor is it only the gates of the nobles, but the whole land, that is doomed to destruction; (*v. 5.*) for though the nobles were the leaders in persecuting and oppressing God's people, yet the whole land concurred with them in it.

(2.) The persons brought together to lay Babylon waste, are here called, [1.] *God's sanctified ones*, (*v. 3.*) designed for this service, and set apart to it by the purpose and providence of God; disengaged from other projects, that they might wholly apply themselves to this; such as were qualified for that to which they were called; for what work God employs men in, he does in some measure fit them for. It intimates likewise that in God's intention, though not in theirs, it was a holy war; they designed only the enlargement of their own empire, but God designed the release of his people, and a type of the destruction of the New Testament Babylon. Cyrus, the person principally concerned, was justly called a *sanctified one*, for he was God's anointed, (*ch. xlv. 1.*) and a figure of him that was to come. It is a pity but all soldiers, especially those that fight the

Lord's battles, should be, in the strictest sense, sanctified ones; it is a wonder *they* dare be profane ones, who carry their lives in their hands. [2.] They are called God's *mighty ones*, because they had their might from God, and were now to use it for him. It is said of Cyrus, that in this expedition *God held his right hand*, *ch. xlv. 1.* God's sanctified ones are his mighty ones; whom God calls, he qualifies; and whom he makes holy, he makes strong in spirit. [3.] They are said to rejoice in his highness, to serve his glory and the purposes of it with great alacrity. Though Cyrus did not know God, nor actually design his honour in what he did, yet God used him as his servant; (*ch. xlv. 4.*) *Thou hast surnamed thee as my servant*, though *thou hast not known me*; and he rejoiced in those successes, by which God exalted his own name. [4.] They are very numerous, a multitude, a great people; *kingdoms of nations*, (*v. 4.*) not rude and barbarous, but modeled and regular troops, such as are furnished out by well-ordered kingdoms: the great God has hosts at his command. [5.] They are far-fetched, they come from the end of heaven: the vast country of Assyria lay between Babylon and Persia. God can make those a scourge and ruin to his enemies that lie most remote from them, and therefore are least dreaded.

(3.) The summons given them is effectual, their obedience ready, and they make a very formidable appearance; *A banner is lifted up upon the high mountain, v. 2.* God's standard is set up, a flag of defiance hung out against Babylon. It is erected on high, where all may see it; whoever will, may come, and enlist themselves under it, and they shall be taken immediately into God's pay. They that beat for volunteers, must exalt the voice in making proclamation, to encourage soldiers to come in; they must shake the hand, to beckon those at a distance, and to animate those that have enlisted themselves. And they shall not do this in vain; God has commanded and called those whom he designs to make use of, (*v. 3.*) and power goes along with his calls and commands, which cannot be resisted. He that makes men able to serve him, can, when he pleases, make them willing too: it is the *Lord of hosts that musters the host of the battle, v. 4.* He raises them, brings them together, puts them in order, reviews them, has an exact account of them in his muster-roll, sees that they be all in their respective posts, and gives them their necessary orders. Note, All the hosts of war are under the command of the Lord of hosts; and that which makes them truly formidable, is, that when they come against Babylon, the Lord comes, and brings them with him as the *weapons of his indignation, v. 5.* Note, Great princes and armies are but tools in God's hands, weapons that he is pleased to make use of in doing his work, and it is his wrath that arms them, and gives them success.

6. Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. 7. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: 8. And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth; they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. 9. Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate, and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. 10. For the stars of heaven, and the

constellations thereof, shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. 11. And I will punish the world for *their* evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. 12. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. 13. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger. 14. And it shall be as the chased roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up: they shall every man turn to his own people, and flee every one into his own land. 15. Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is joined *unto them* shall fall by the sword. 16. Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished. 17. Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and *as for* gold, they shall not delight in it. 18. *Their* bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children.

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

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

2. Their hearts shall fail them, and they shall have neither courage nor comfort left; they shall not be able either to resist the judgment coming, or to bear up under it, either to oppose the enemy, or to support themselves, v. 7, 8. They that in the day of their peace were proud, and haughty, and terrible, (v. 11.) are, when trouble comes, quite dispirited, and are at their wits' end; all hands shall be faint, and unable to hold a weapon, and every man's heart shall melt, so that they shall be ready to die for fear. The pangs of their fear shall be like those of a woman in hard labour, and they shall be amazed one at another; in frightening themselves, they shall frighten one another; they shall wonder to see those tremble, that used to be bold

and daring; or, they shall be amazed, looking one at another as men at a loss, Gen. xlii. 1. Their faces shall be as flames, pale as flames, through fear; so some; or red as flames sometimes are, blushing at their own cowardice; or their faces shall be as faces scorched with the flames, or as theirs that labour in the fire, their *visage blacker than a coal*; or like *a bottle in the smoke*, Ps. cxix. 83.

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

4. God will visit them for their iniquity; and all this is intended for the punishment of sin, and particularly the sin of pride, v. 11. This puts wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery, (1.) That sin must now have its punishment; though Babylon be a little world, yet, being a wicked world, it shall not go unpunished. Sin brings desolation on the world of the ungodly; and when the kingdoms of the earth are quarrelling with one another, it is the fruit of God's controversy with them all. (2.) That pride must now have its fall. The haughtiness of the terrible must now be laid low, particularly of Nebuchadnezzar and his son Belshazzar, who had, in their pride, trampled upon, and made themselves very terrible to, the people of God. *A man's pride will bring him low*.

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

6. There shall be a universal confusion and consternation; such a confusion of their affairs, that it shall be like the *shaking of the heavens*, with dreadful thunders, and the removing of the earth, by no less dreadful earthquakes. All shall go to wreck and ruin *in the day of the wrath of the Lord of hosts*; v. 13. And such a consternation shall seize their spirits, that Babylon, which used to be like a roaring lion, and a ranging bear, to all about her, shall become *as a chased roe*, and *as a sheep that no man takes up*, v. 14. The army they shall bring into the field, consisting of troops of divers nations, (as great armies usually do,) shall be so dispersed by their enemies' sword, that they shall *turn every man to his own people*, each man shall shift for his own safety; *the men of might shall not find their hands*, (Ps. lxxvi. 5.) but take to their heels.

8. There shall be a general scene of blood and horror, as is usual where the sword devours. No wonder that every one makes the best of his way, since the conqueror gives no quarter, but puts all to the sword, and not those only that are found in arms, as is usual with us even in the most cruel

slaughters: (v. 15.) *Every one that is found alive, shall be run through*, as soon as ever it appears that he is a Babylonian. Nay, because the sword devours one as well as another, *every one that is joined to them, shall fall by the sword*; those of other nations that come in to their assistance, shall be cut off with them. It is dangerous being in bad company, and helping those whom God is about to destroy: those particularly that join themselves to Babylon, must expect to share in her plagues, Rev. xviii. 4. And since the most sacred laws of nature, and humanity itself, are *silenced* by the fury of war, (though they cannot be *cancelled*;) the conquerors shall, in the most barbarous brutish manner, *dash the children to pieces, and ravish the wives. Jusque datum sceleris—Wickedness shall have free course*, v. 16. They had thus dealt with God's people, (Lam. v. 11.) and now they shall be paid in their own coin, Rev. iii. 10. It was particularly foretold, (Ps. cxxxvii. 9.) that the *little ones of Babylon should be dashed against the stones*. How cruel soever, and unjust, they were that did it, God was righteous who suffered it to be done, and to be done before their eyes, to their great terror and vexation. It was just also that the houses which they had filled with the spoil of Israel, should be spoiled and plundered. What is got by rapine, is often lost in the same manner.

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

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

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

19. And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. 20. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there, neither shall the shepherds make their fold there: 21. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses

shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. 22. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces; and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.

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

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

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

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

said of the destruction of the New Testament Babylon, whereof the former was a type; *In one hour is her judgment come.*

## CHAP. XIV.

In this chapter, I. More weight is added to the burthen of Babylon, enough to sink it like a mill-stone; 1. It is Israel's cause that is to be pleaded in this quarrel with Babylon, v. 1. . . 3. 2. The king of Babylon, for the time being, shall be remarkably brought down and triumphed over, v. 4. . . 20. 3. The whole race of the Babylonians shall be cut off and extirpated, v. 21. . . 23. II. A confirmation of the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, which was a thing at a distance, is here given in the prophecy of the destruction of the Assyrian army that invaded the land, which happened not long after, v. 24. . . 27. III. The success of Hezekiah against the Philistines is here foretold, and the advantages which his people would gain thereby, v. 28. . . 32.

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

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

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

II. The particular favours he designed them.

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

2. Many should be proselyted to their holy religion, and should return with them, induced to do so

by the manifest tokens of God's favourable presence with them, the operations of God's grace in them, and his providence for them; *Strangers shall be joined with them*, saying, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*, Zecl. viii. 23. It adds much to the honour and strength of Israel, when strangers are joined with them, and there are added to the church many from without, Acts ii. 47. Let not the church's children be shy of strangers, but receive those whom God receives, and own those who cleave to the house of Jacob.

3. These proselytes should not only be a credit to their cause, but very helpful and serviceable to them in their return home; the people among whom they live shall take them, take care of them, take pity on them, and shall bring them to their place, as friends, loath to part with such good company, as servants, willing to do them all the good offices they could. God's people, wherever their lot is cast, should endeavour thus, by all the instances of an exemplary and winning conversation, to gain an interest in the affections of those about them, and recommend religion to their good opinion. This was fulfilled in the return of the captives from Babylon, when all that were about them, pursuant to Cyrus's proclamation, contributed to their remove, (Ezra i. 4, 6.) not, as the Egyptians, because they were sick of them, but because they loved them.

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

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

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



from the bondage of sin, have a foundation laid for true rest from sorrow and fear.

4. That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! 5. The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked, *and* the sceptre of the rulers. 6. He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, *and* none hindereth. 7. The whole earth is at rest, *and* is quiet: they break forth into singing. 8. Yea, the fir-trees rejoice at thee, *and* the cedars of Lebanon, *saying*, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. 9. Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, *even* all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. 10. All they shall speak, and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? 11. Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, *and* the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. 12. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! 13. For thou hast said in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: 14. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. 15. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. 16. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, *and* consider thee, *saying*, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; 17. *That* made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; *that* opened not the house of his prisoners? 18. All the kings of the nations, *even* all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house: 19. But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, *and* as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcass trodden under feet. 20. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, *and* slain thy people: the seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned. 21. Prepare slaughter for his children, for the iniquity of their fathers; that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities. 22. For I will rise up against them, saith the LORD of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew,

saith the LORD. 23. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the LORD of hosts.

The kings of Babylon, successively, were the great enemies and oppressors of God's people, and therefore the destruction of Babylon, the fall of the king, and the ruin of his family, are here particularly taken notice of and triumphed in; in the day that God has given Israel rest, they shall *take up this proverb against the king of Babylon*. We must not rejoice when our enemy falls, as ours; but when Babylon, the common enemy of God and his Israel, sinks, then *rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets*, Rev. xviii. 20. The Babylonian monarchy bade fair to be an absolute, universal, and perpetual one, and, in these pretensions, vied with the Almighty; it is therefore very justly, not only brought down, but insulted over when it is down; and it is not only the last monarch, Belshazzar, who *was slain on that night* that Babylon was taken, (Dan. v. 30.) who is here triumphed over, but the whole monarchy, which sunk in him: not without special reference to Nebuchadnezzar, in whom that monarchy was at its height. Now here,

1. The fall of the king of Babylon is rejoiced in; and a most curious, elegant composition is here prepared, not to adorn his hearse or monument, but to expose his memory, and fix a lasting brand of infamy upon it. It gives us an account of the life and death of this mighty monarch, how he *went down slain to the pit*, though he had been the *terror of the mighty in the land of the living*, Ezek. xxxii. 27.

In this parable we may observe,

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

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

(1.) Great oppression and cruelty; he is known by the name of the *oppressor*, (v. 4.) he has the *sceptre of the rulers*, (v. 5.) has the command of all the princes about him; but it is the staff of the wicked, a staff with which he supports himself in his wickedness, and wickedly strikes all about him: *He smote the people*, not in justice, for their correction and reformation, but in wrath, (v. 6.) to gratify his own peevish resentments, and that with a continual stroke, pursued them with his forces,

and gave them no respite, no breathing time, no cessation of arms. He ruled the nations, but he ruled them in anger, every thing he said and did was in passion; so that he who had the government of all about him, had no government of himself; he *made the world as a wilderness*, as if he had taken a pride in being the plague of his generation, and a curse to mankind, (v. 17.) Great princes used to glory in building cities, but he gloried in destroying them; see Ps. ix. 6.

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

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

*I ascend*, and be as great as he; I will be like him whom they call the *Most High*." It is a gracious ambition to covet to be like the *Most Holy*, for he has said, *Be ye holy, for I am holy*; but it is a sinful ambition to aim to be like the *Most High*, for he has said, *He who exalts himself, shall be abased*; and the devil drew our first parents in to eat forbidden fruit, by promising them that they should be as gods. [4.] That he shall himself be deified after his death, as some of the first founders of the Assyrian monarchy were, and stars had even their names from them, "But," (says he) "*I will exalt my throne above them all*." Such as this was his pride, which was the undoubted omen of his destruction.

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

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

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

(3.) That he should be slain, and go down to the congregation of the dead, to be free among them, as the slain that are no more remembered, Ps. lxxxviii. 5. He shall be weak as the dead are, and like unto them, v. 10. *His pomp is brought down to the grave*, it perishes with him; the pomp of his life shall not, as usual, end in a funeral pomp. True glory, that is, true grace, will go up with the soul to heaven, but vain pomp will go down with the body to the grave, there is an end of it. The noise of his viols is now heard no more; death is a farewell to the pleasures, as well as to the pomps of this world. This mighty prince, that used to lie on a bed of down, and tread upon rich carpets, and to have coverings and canopies exquisitely fine, now shall have the worms spread under him, and the worms covering him, (v. 11.) worms bred out of his own putrefied body, which, though he fancied himself a god, proved him to be made of the same mould with other men. When we are pampering and decking our bodies, it is good to remember they will be worms' meat shortly.

(4.) That he should not have the honour of a burial, much less of a decent one, and in the sepulchres of his ancestors; *The kings of the nations lie in glory*; (v. 18.) either the dead bodies themselves, so embalmed as to be preserved from putrefaction, as of old among the Egyptians; or their effigies (as with us) erected over their graves. Thus, as if they would defy the ignominy of death, they lay in a poor, faint sort of glory, *every one in his own house*, his own burying-place; for the grave is the house appointed for all living, a sleeping-house, where the busy and troublesome will lie quiet, and the trou-

bled and weary lie at rest. But this king of Babylon is cast out, and has no grave; (v. 19.) his dead body is thrown, like that of a beast, into the next ditch, or upon the next dunghill, like an abominable branch of some noxious, poisonous plant, which nobody will touch; or as the clothes of malefactors put to death, and by the hand of justice thrust through with a sword, on whose dead bodies heaps of stones are raised, or they are thrown into some deep quarry, among the stones of the pit. Nay, the king of Babylon's dead body shall be as the carcases of those who are slain in a battle, who are trodden under feet by the horses and soldiers, and crushed to pieces: thus he *shall not be joined with his ancestors in burial*, v. 20. To be denied decent burial is a disgrace, which, if it be inflicted for righteousness-sake (as Ps. lxxix. 2.) may, as other similar reproaches, be rejoiced in; (Matth. v. 12.) it is the lot of the two witnesses, Rev. xi. 9. But if, as here, it be the just punishment of iniquity, it is an intimation that evil pursues impenitent sinners beyond death, greater evil than that, and that they shall rise to everlasting shame and contempt.

4. The many triumphs that should be in his fall.

(1.) Those whom he had been a great tyrant and terror to, will be glad that they are rid of him; (v. 7, 8.) Now that he is gone, *the whole earth is at rest, and is quiet*, for he was the great disturber of the peace; now they all *break forth into singing, for when the wicked perish, there is shouting*; (Prov. xi. 10.) the fir-trees and cedars of Lebanon now think themselves safe, there is no danger now of their being cut down, to make way for his vast armies, or to furnish him with timber. The neighbouring princes, and great men, who are compared to fir-trees and cedars, (Zech. xi. 2.) may now be easy, and out of fear of being dispossessed of their rights, *for the hammer of the whole earth is cut asunder and broken*, (Jer. l. 23.) the axe that *boasted itself against him that hewed with it*, ch. x. 15.

(2.) The congregation of the dead will bid him welcome to them, especially those whom he had barbarously hastened thither; (v. 9, 10.) "*Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming, and to compliment thee upon thy arrival at their dark and dreadful regions.*" The chief ones of the earth, who, when they were alive, were kept in awe by him, and durst not come near him, but rose from their thrones, to resign them to him, these shall upbraid him with it; when he comes into the state of the dead, they shall go forth to meet him, as they used to do when he made his public entry into cities he was become master of; with such a parade shall he be introduced into those regions of horror, to make his disgrace and torment the more grievous to him. They shall scoffingly rise from their thrones and seats there, and ask him if he will please to sit down in them, as he used to do in their thrones on earth? The confusion that will then cover him they shall make a jest of; "*Art thou also become weak as we? Who would have thought it? It is what thou thyself didst not expect it would ever come to, when thou wast in every thing too hard for us. Thou that didst rank thyself among the immortal gods, art thou come to take thy fate among us poor mortal men? Where is thy pomp now, and where thy mirth? How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning,*" v. 11, 12. The king of Babylon has shone as bright as the morning-star, and fancied that, wherever he came, he brought day along with him; and is such an illustrious prince as this fallen, such a star become a clod of clay? Did ever any man fall from such a height of honour and power into such an abyss of shame and misery? This has been commonly alluded to, (and it is a mere allusion,) to illustrate the fall of the angels, who were as morning-stars, Job xxxviii.

7. But how are they fallen! How art thou cut down to the ground, and levelled with it, that didst weaken the nations! God will reckon with those that invade the rights, and disturb the peace, of mankind, for he is King of nations as well as saints.

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

(3.) Spectators will stand amazed at his fall. When he shall be brought down to hell, *to the sides of the pit*, and to be lodged there, (v. 15.) they that see him shall *narrowly look upon him, and consider him*, they shall scarcely believe their own eyes; never was death so great a change to any man as it is to him. Is it possible that a man who a few hours ago looked so great, so pleasant, and was so splendidly adorned and attended, should now look so ghastly, so despicable, and lie thus naked and neglected? *Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, and shook kingdoms?* Who would have thought he should ever have come to this? Psalm lxxxii. 7.

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

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

1. The royal family is to be wholly extirpated. The Medes and Persians that are to be employed in this destroying work, are ordered, when they have slain Belshazzar, *to prepare slaughter for his children*, (v. 21.) and not to spare them; the little ones of Babylon must be dashed against the stones, Ps. cxxxvii. 9. These orders sound very harsh; but, (1.) They must suffer for the iniquity of their fathers, which is often visited upon the children, to show how much God hates sin, and is displeased at it, and to deter sinners from it, which is the end of punishment. Nebuchadnezzar had slain Zedekiah's sons, (Jer. lii. 10.) and for that iniquity of his, his seed are paid in the same coin. (2.) They must be cut off now, that they may not rise up to possess the land, and do as much mischief in their day as their fathers had done in theirs; that they may not be as vexatious to the world by building cities for the support of their tyranny, (which was Nimrod's policy, Gen. x. 11.) as their ancestors had been by destroying cities. Pharaoh oppressed Israel in Egypt by setting them to build cities, Exod. i. 11. The providence of God consults the welfare of nations more than we are aware of, by cutting off some who, if they had lived, would have done mischief. Justly may the enemies cut off the children; *For I will rise up against them, saith the Lord of hosts*, v. 22. And if God reveal it as his mind that he will have it done, as none can hinder it, so none need scruple to further it. Babylon perhaps was proud of the numbers of her royal family, but God

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

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

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

The destruction of Babylon and the Chaldean empire was a thing at a great distance; the empire was not risen to any considerable height when its fall was here foretold: it was almost 200 years from this prediction of Babylon's fall to the accomplishment of it. Now the people to whom Isaiah prophesied, might ask, "What is this to us, or what shall we be the better for it, and what assurance shall we have of it?" To both which questions he answers in these verses, by a prediction of the ruin both of the Assyrians and of the Philistines, the present enemies that infested them, which they should shortly be eye-witnesses of, and have benefit by. These would be a present comfort to them, and a pledge of future deliverance, for the confirming of the faith of their posterity. God is to his people

the same to-day that he was yesterday, and will be hereafter; and he will for ever be the same that he has been, and is. Here is,

I. Assurance given of the destruction of the Assyrians; (*v. 25.*) *I will break the Assyrian in my land.* Sennacherib brought a very formidable army into the land of Judah, but there God broke it, broke all his regiments by the sword of a destroying angel. Note, Those who wrongfully invade God's land, shall find it is at their peril, and those who with unhallowed feet trample upon his holy mountains, shall themselves there be trodden under foot. God undertakes to do it himself, his people having no might against the great company that came against them; "I will break the Assyrian; let me alone to do it, who have angels, hosts of angels at command." Now the breaking of the power of the Assyrian would be the breaking of the yoke from off the neck of God's people. His burthen shall depart from off their shoulders, the burthen of quartering that vast army, and paying contribution; therefore the Assyrian must be broken, that Judah and Jerusalem may be eased. Let those that make themselves a yoke and a burthen to God's people, see what they are to expect.

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

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

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

II. Assurance is likewise given of the destruction of the Philistines and their power. This burthen, this prophecy, that lay as a load upon them, to sink their state, came in the year that king Ahaz died; which was the first year of Hezekiah's reign;

(v. 28.) when a good king came in the room of a bad one, then this acceptable message was sent among them. When we reform, then, and not till then, we may look for good news from heaven. Now here we have,

1. A rebuke to the Philistines for triumphing in the death of king Uzziah. He had been as a serpent to them, had bitten them, had smitten them, had brought them very low; (2 Chron. xxvi. 6.) he *warred against the Philistines, broke down their walls, and built cities among them*; but when Uzziah died, or rather abdicated, it was told with joy in Gath, and *published in the streets of Askelon*. It is inhuman thus to rejoice in our neighbour's fall; but let them not be secure, for though, when Uzziah was dead, they made reprisals upon Ahaz, and took many of the cities of Judah, (2 Chron. xxviii. 18.) yet out of the root of Uzziah should come a cockatrice, a more formidable enemy than Uzziah was, even Hezekiah, the fruit of whose government should be to them a fiery flying serpent, for he should fall upon them with incredible swiftness and fury: we find he did so; (2 Kings xviii. 8.) *He smote the Philistines even to Gaza*. Note, If God remove one useful instrument in the midst of his usefulness, he can, and will, raise up others to carry on and complete the same work that they were employed in, and left unfinished.

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

III. The good use that should be made of all these events for the encouragement of the people of God; (v. 32.) *What shall one then answer the messengers of the nations?* This implies, 1. That the great things God does for his people, are, and cannot but be, taken notice of by their neighbours; they among the heathen make remarks upon them, Ps. cxxvi. 2. 2. That messengers will be sent to inquire concerning them. Jacob and Israel had long been a people distinguished from all others, and dignified with uncommon favours; and therefore some, for good-will, others, for ill-will, and all, for curiosity, are inquisitive concerning them. 3. That it concerns us always to be ready to give a reason of the hope that we have in the providence of God,

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

## CHAP. XV.

This chapter, and that which follows it, are the burthen of Moab; a prophecy of some great desolation that was coming upon that country, which bordered upon this land of Israel, and had often been injurious and vexatious to it, though the Moabites were descended from Lot, Abraham's kinsman and companion, and though the Israelites, by the appointment of God, had spared them, when they might both easily and justly have cut them off with their neighbours. In this chapter, we have, I. Great lamentations made by the Moabites, and by the prophet himself for them, v. 1..5. II. The great calamities which should occasion that lamentation, and justify it, v. 6..9.

1. **T**HE burthen of Moab. Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, and brought to silence; because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste, and brought to silence: 2. He is gone up to Bajith, and

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

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

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

Now concerning Moab, it here foretold,

1. That their chief cities should be surprised and taken in a night by their enemy, probably because the inhabitants, as the men of Laish, indulged themselves in ease and luxury, and dwelt securely; (v. 1.) *Therefore* there shall be great grief, *because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, and Kir of Moab*; the two principal cities of that kingdom. *In the night that they were taken, or sacked, Moab was cut off.* The seizing of them laid the whole country open, and made all the wealth of it an easy prey to the victorious army. Note, (1.) Great changes and very dismal ones may be made in a very little time. Here are two cities lost in a night, though that is the time of quietness: let us therefore lie down as those that know not what a night may bring forth. (2.) As the country feeds the cities, so the cities protect the country, and neither can say to the other, *I have no need of thee.*

2. That the Moabites, being hereby put into the utmost consternation imaginable, should have recourse to their idols for relief, and pour out their tears before them; (v. 2.) *He*, that is, Moab, especially the king of Moab, *is gone up to Bajith*, or rather, to the house or temple of Chemosh; and Dibon, the inhabitants of Dibon, are gone up to the high places, where they worshipped their idols, there to make their complaints. Note, It becomes a people in distress to seek their God; and shall not we then thus *walk in the name of the Lord our God*, and call upon him in the time of trouble, before whom we shall not shed such useless profitless tears as they did before their gods?

3. That there should be the voice of universal grief, all the country over. It is described here elegantly and very affectingly. Moab shall be a vale of tears; a little map of this world, v. 2. The Moabites shall lament the loss of Nebo and Medeba, two considerable cities, which, it is likely, were plundered and burnt. They shall tear their hair for grief, to that degree, that *on all their heads shall be baldness*, and they shall cut off their beards, according to the customary expressions of mourning in those times and countries. When they go abroad, they shall be so far from coveting to appear handsome, that *in the streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth*; and perhaps being forced to use that poor clothing, the enemies having stripped them, and rifed their houses, and left them no other clothing. When they come home, instead of applying themselves to their business, they shall go up to the tops of their houses, which were flat-roofed, and there they shall weep abundantly, nay, they shall howl, in crying to their gods: those that *cry not to God with their hearts*, do but *howl upon their beds*, Hos. vii. 14. Amos viii. 3. *They shall come down with weeping*; so the margin reads it; they shall come down from their high places and the tops of their houses, weeping as much as they did when they went up. Prayer to the true God is heart's-ease, (1 Sam. i. 18.) but prayers to false gods are not. Divers places are here named, that should be full of lamentation, (v. 4.) and it is but a poor relief to have so many fellow-sufferers, fellow-mourners; to a public spirit it is rather an aggravation, *socios habuisse doloris—to have associates in wo.*

4. That the courage of their militia should fail them; though they were bred soldiers, and were well armed, yet they shall cry out, and shriek, for fear, and every one of them shall have *his life become grievous to him*; though it is a military life, which delights in danger, v. 4. See how easily God can dispirit the stoutest of men, and deprive a nation of benefit, by those whom it most depended upon for strength and defence. The Moabites shall generally be so overwhelmed with grief, that life itself shall be a burthen to them. God can easily make weary of life those that are fondest of it.

5. That the outcry for these calamities should propagate grief to all the adjacent parts, v. 5. (1.) The prophet himself has very sensible impressions made upon his spirit by the prediction of it: *My heart shall cry out for Moab*; though they are enemies to Israel, they are our fellow-creatures, of the same rank with us, and therefore it should grieve us to see them in such distress, the rather because we know not how soon it may be our own turn to drink of the same cup of trembling." Note, It becomes God's ministers to be of a tender spirit, not to desire the woful day, but to be like their Master, who wept over Jerusalem, even then when he gave her up to ruin; like their God, who *desires not the death of sinners*. (2.) All the neighbouring cities shall echo to the lamentations of Moab. The fugitives, who are making the best of their way to



shift for their own safety, shall carry the cry to Zoar, the city to which their ancestor Lot fled for shelter from Sodom's flames, which was spared for his sake. They shall make as great a noise with their cry, as a heifer of three years old does, when she goes lowing for her calf, as 1 Sam. vi. 12. They shall go up the hill of *Luhith*, as David went up the ascent of mount Olivet, many a weary step, and all in tears, 2 Sam. xv. 30. And in the way of Horoniam, (a dual termination,) the way that leads to the two Beth-horons, the upper and the nether, which we read of, Josh. xvi. 3, 5. Thither the cry shall be carried, there it should be raised; even at that great distance, a cry of destruction, that shall be the cry; like, "Fire, fire, we are all undone." Grief is catching, so is fear, and justly, for trouble is spreading, and when it begins, who knows where it will end?

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

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

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

1. *The waters of Nimrim are desolate*, (v. 6.) The country is plundered and impoverished, and all the wealth and substance of it swept away by the victorious army. Famine is usually the sad effect of war. Look into the fields that were well watered, the fruitful meadows that yielded delightful prospects, and more delightful products, and there all is eaten up, or carried off by the enemy's foragers, and the remainder trodden to dirt by their horses. If an army encamp upon green fields, their greenness is soon gone. Look into the houses, and they are stripped too; (v. 7.) *The abundance of wealth that they had gotten with a great deal of art and industry, and that which they have laid up with a great deal of care and confidence, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows.* Either the owners shall carry it thither to hide it, or the enemies shall carry it thither to pack it up, and send it home, by water perhaps, to their own country. Note, (1.) Those that are eager to get abundance of this world, and solicitous to lay up what they have gotten, little consider what may become of it, and in how little a time it may be all taken from them. Great abundance, by tempting the robbers, exposes the owners; and they who depend upon it to protect them, often find it does but betray them. (2.) In times of distress, great riches are often great burthens, and do but

increase the owner's care or the enemies' strength. *Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator—The pennyless traveller will exult, when accosted by a robber, in having nothing about him.*

2. *The waters of Dimon are turned into blood*, (v. 9.) The inhabitants of the country are slain in great numbers, so that the waters adjoining to the cities, whether rivers or pools, are discoloured with human gore, inhumanly shed like water. *Dimon* signifies *bloody*; the place shall answer to its name. Perhaps it was that place in the country of Moab, where the water seemed to the *Moabites as blood*, (2 Kings iii. 22, 23.) which occasioned their overthrow. But now, says God, *I will bring more upon Dimon*, more blood than was shed, or thought to be seen, at that time. *I will bring additions upon Dimon*, (so the word is,) additional plagues; I have yet more judgments in reserve for them; for *all this, God's anger is not turned away*. When he judges, he will overcome; and to the roll of curses he added many like words, Jer. xxxvi. 32. See here what is the *yet more evil* to be brought upon Dimon, upon Moab, which is now to be made a land of blood. Some flee, and make their escape, others sit still, and are overlooked, and are as a remnant of the land; but upon both God will bring lions, beasts of prey; (which are reckoned one of God's four judgments, Ezek. xiv. 21.) and these shall glean up those that have escaped the sword of the enemy. Those that continue impenitent in sin, when they are preserved from one judgment, are but reserved for another.

## CHAP. XVI.

This chapter continues and concludes the burthen of Moab. In it, I. The prophet gives good counsel to the Moabites, to reform what was amiss among them, and particularly to be kind to God's people, as the likeliest way to prevent the judgments before threatened, v. 1..5. II. Fearing they would not take this counsel, (they were so proud,) he goes on to foretell the lamentable devastation of their country, and the confusion they should be brought to, and this within three years, v. 6..14.

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

God has made it to appear that he delights not in the ruin of sinners, by telling them what they may do to prevent the ruin; so he does here to Moab.

I. He advises them to be just to the house of David, and to pay the tribute they had formerly covenanted to pay to the kings of his line; (v. 1.) *Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land.* David made the Moabites tributaries to him; (2 Sam. viii. 2.) they became his servants, and brought gifts. Afterwards they paid their tribute to the kings of Israel.

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

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

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

2. He bespeaks a shelter for them in the land of Moab, when their own land was made disagreeable to them. This judgment they must execute; thus wisely must they do for themselves, and thus kindly must they deal with the people of God. If they would themselves continue in their habitations, let

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

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

ple by this, and then assure themselves that their state shall be established.

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

Here we have,

1. The sins with which Moab is charged, *v. 6.* The prophet seems to check himself for going about to give good counsel to the Moabites, concluding they would not take the advice he gave them. He told them their duty, (whether they would hear, or whether they would forbear,) but despairs of working any good upon them; he would have healed them, but they would not be healed. They that will not be counselled, cannot be helped. Their sins were, 1. Pride; this is most insisted upon; for perhaps there are more precious souls ruined by pride than by any one lust whatsoever. The Moabites were notorious for this; *We have heard of the pride of Moab*; it is what all their neighbours cry out shame upon them for; he is very proud; the body of the nation is so, forgetting the baseness of their original, and the brand of infamy fastened upon them by that Law of God, which forbade a Moabite to enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever, Deut. xxiii. 3. We have heard of *his haughtiness and his pride*; it is not the rash and rigid censure of one or two concerning them, but it is the character which all that know them will give of them; they are a proud people; and therefore they will not take good counsel when it is given them, they

think themselves too wise to be advised; therefore they will not take example by Hezekiah to do justly and love mercy; they scorn to make him their pattern, for they think themselves able to teach him. They are proud, and therefore will not be subject to God himself, nor regard the warnings he gives them. *The wicked, in the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God*: they are proud, and therefore will not entertain and protect God's outcasts, they scorn to have any thing to do with them; but this is not all, 2. We have heard of his wrath too, (for those that are very proud, are commonly very passionate,) particularly his wrath against the people of God, whom therefore he will rather persecute than protect. 3. It is with his lies that he gains, the gratifications of his pride and his passion; but his lies shall not be so, he shall not compass his proud and angry projects, as he hoped he should. Some read it, *His haughtiness, his pride, and his wrath, are greater than his strength.* We know that if we lay at his mercy, we should find no mercy with him, but he has not power equal to his malice, his pride draws down ruin upon him, for it is the preface to destruction, and he has not strength to ward it off.

II. The sorrows with which Moab is threatened; (*v. 7.*) *Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab*; all the inhabitants shall bitterly lament the ruin of their country, they shall complain one to another, every one shall howl in despair, and not one shall either see any cause, or have any heart, to encourage his friend. Observe,

1. The causes of this sorrow. (1.) The destruction of their cities; *For the foundations of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn*; that great and strong city, which had held out against a mighty force, (2 Kings iii. 15.) should now be levelled with the ground either burnt or broken down, and its foundations stricken, bruised and broken; so the word signifies, they shall howl when they see their splendid cities turned into ruinous heaps. (2.) The desolation of their country. Moab was famous for its fields and vineyards; but those shall all be laid waste by the invading army, (*v. 8, 10.*) See, [1.] What a fruitful, pleasant country they had, as the garden of the Lord, Gen. xiii. 10. It was planted with choice and noble vines, with principal plants, which reach even to Jazer, a city in the tribe of Gad; the luxuriant branches of their vines wandered, and wound themselves along the ranges on which they were spread, even through the wilderness of Moab, there were vineyards there; nay, they were stretched out, and went even to the sea, the Dead sea; the best grapes grew in their hedge-rows. [2.] How merry and pleasant they had been in it; many a time they had shouted for their summer-fruits, and for their harvest, as the country people sometimes do with us, when they have cut down all their corn. They had had joy and gladness in their fields and vineyards, singing and shouting at the treading of their grapes; nothing is said of their praising God for their abundance, and giving him the glory of it. If they had made it the matter of their thanksgiving, they might still have had it the matter of their rejoicing, but they made it the food and fuel of their lusts; see therefore, [3.] How they should be stripped of all; the fields shall languish, all the fruits of them being carried away, or trodden down; they cannot now enrich their owners as they have done, and therefore they languish. The soldiers, called here *the lords of the heathen*, shall break down all the plants, though they were principal plants, the choicest that could be got. Now the shouting for the enjoyment of the summer-fruits is fallen, and is turned into howling for the loss of them; the joy at harvest is ceased, there is no more singing, no more shouting, for the treading out of wine: they have

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

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

In the close of this chapter, we have,

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

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

[1.] The thing itself was long since determined; (v. 13.) *This is the word*, this is the thing, *that the Lord has spoken concerning Moab*, since the time that he began to be so proud and insolent, and abusive to God's people. The country was long ago doomed to ruin; this was enough to give an assurance of it, that *it is the word which the Lord has spoken*; and as he will never unsay what he has spoken, so all the power of hell and earth cannot gainsay it, or obstruct the execution of it.

[2.] Now it was made known when it should be

done; the time was before fixed in the counsel of God, but now it was revealed, *The Lord has spoken* that it shall be *within three years*, v. 14. *It is not for us to know*, or covet to know, *the times and the seasons*, any further than God has thought fit to make them known; and so far we may and must take notice of them. See how God makes known his mind by degrees; the light of divine revelation shone more and more, and so does the light of divine grace in the heart.

Observe, *First*, The sentence passed upon Moab; *The glory of Moab shall be contemned*; it shall be contemptible, when all these things they have gloried in, shall come to nothing. Such is the glory of this world, so fading and uncertain, admired awhile, but soon slighted. Let that therefore which will soon be contemptible in the eyes of others, be always contemptible in our eyes, in comparison with the far more exceeding weight of glory. It was the glory of Moab that their country was very populous, and their forces courageous, but where is her glory, when all that great multitude is in a manner swept away, some by one judgment, and some by another, and the little remnant that is left shall be very small and feeble, not able to bear up under their own griefs, much less to make head against their enemies' insults? Let not therefore the strong glory in their strength, nor the many in their numbers.

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

## CHAP. XVII.

Syria and Ephraim were confederate against Judah, (ch. vii. 1, 2.) and they being so closely linked together in their counsels, this chapter, though it be entitled *the burthen of Damascus*, (which was the head city of Syria,) reads the doom of Israel too. I. The destruction of the strong cities both of Syria and Israel is here foretold, (v. 1. .5.) and again, v. 9. .11. II. In the midst of judgment mercy is remembered to Israel, and a gracious promise made that a remnant should be preserved from the calamities, and should get good by them, v. 6. .8. III. The overthrow of the Assyrian army before Jerusalem is pointed at, v. 12. .14. In order of time, this chapter should be placed next after ch. ix. for the destruction of Damascus here foretold, happened in the reign of Ahaz, 2 Kings xvi. 9.

1. **T**HE burden of Damascus. Behold Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap. 2. The cities of Aroer are forsaken; they shall be for flocks which shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid. 3. The fortress shall also cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria: they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the Lord of hosts. 4. And in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean. 5. And it shall be as when the harvest-man gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim.

We have here the burthen of Damascus; the

Chaldee Paraphrase reads it, *The burthen of the cup of the curse to drink to Damascus in*; and the ten tribes being in alliance, they must expect to pledge Damascus in this cup of trembling that is to go round.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(2.) It is all gathered and carried away by the Assyrian army, as the corn is carried out of the field by the husbandman, v. 5. The corn is the glory of the fields; (Ps. lxx. 13.) but when it is reaped and gone, where is the glory? The people

had by their sins made themselves ripe for ruin, and their glory was as quickly, as easily, as justly, and as irresistibly, cut down and taken away, as the corn is out of the field by the husbandman. God's judgments are compared to the *thrusting in of the sickle, when the harvest is ripe*, Rev. xiv. 15. And the victorious army, like the careful husbandmen in the valley of Rephaim, where the corn was extraordinary, would not, if they could help it, leave an ear behind, would lose nothing that they could lay their hands on.

6. Yet *gleaning-grapes shall be left in it*, as the shaking of an olive-tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the LORD God of Israel. 7. At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. 3. And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect *that* which his fingers have made, either the groves or the images.

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

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

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

at all times to have respect to God, to have our eyes ever toward him, both as our Maker, the Author of our being, and the God of nature, and as the Holy One of Israel, a God in covenant with us, and the God of grace; particularly, when we are in affliction, our eyes must be toward the Lord, to *pluck our feet out of the net*; (Ps. xxv. 15.) to bring us to this is the design of his providence, as he is our Maker, and the work of his grace, as he is the Holy One of Israel. (2.) They shall look off from their idols, the creatures of their own fancy, shall no longer worship them, and seek to them, and expect relief from them. For God will be *alone* regarded, or he does not look upon himself as *at all* regarded. He that looks to his Maker, must not *look to the altars, the work of his hands*, but disown them and cast them off; must not retain the least respect for that which his fingers have made, but break it to pieces, though it were his own workmanship, the groves and the images; the word signifies images made in honour of the sun, and by which he was worshipped, the most ancient and most plausible idolatry, Deut. iv. 19. Job xxxi. 26. We have reason to account those happy afflictions, which part between us and our sins, and, by sensible convictions of the vanity of the world, that great idol, cool our affections to it, and lower our expectations from it.

9. In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch, which they left, because of the children of Israel: and there shall be desolation. 10. Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength; therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips: 11. In that day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish; *but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.*

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

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

2. That the country should be laid waste, v. 10, 11. Observe here, (1.) The sin that had provoked God to bring so great a destruction upon that plea-

sant land; *it was for the iniquity of them that dwelt therein*; "It is because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and all the great salvations he has wrought for thee, hast forgotten thy dependence upon him and obligations to him, and *hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength*, not only who is himself a strong Rock, but has been thy Strength many a time, or thou hadst been sunk and broken long since." Note, The God of our salvation is the Rock of our strength; and our forgetfulness and unmindfulness of him are at the bottom of all sin; *therefore we have perverted our way, because we have forgotten the Lord our God*, and so we undo ourselves. (2.) The destruction itself, aggravated by the great care they took to improve their land, and to make it yet more pleasant. [1.] Look upon it at the time of the seedness, and it was all like a garden and a vineyard; that pleasant land was replenished with pleasant plants, the choicest of its own growth; nay, so nice and curious were the inhabitants, that, not content with them, they sent to all the neighbouring countries for strange slips, the more valuable for being strange, uncommon, far-fetched, and dear-bought, though perhaps they had of their own not inferior to them. This was an instance of their pride and vanity, and (that ruining error) their affection to be *like the nations*. *If wheat, and honey, and oil*, were their staple commodities; (Ezek. xxvii. 17.) but not content with these, they must have flowers and greens with strange names imported from other nations, and a great deal of care and pains must be taken by hot-beds to make these plants to grow, the soil must be forced, and they must be covered with glasses to shelter them, and early in the morning the gardeners must be up to make the seed to flourish, that it may excel those of their neighbours. The ornaments of nature are not to be altogether slighted, but it is a folly to be over-fond of them, and to bestow more time, and cost, and pains, about them than they deserve, as many do. But here this instance seems to be put in general for their great industry in cultivating their ground, and their expectations from it accordingly; they doubt not but their plants will grow and flourish. But, [2.] Look upon the same ground at the time of harvest, and it is all like a wilderness, a dismal melancholy place, even to the spectators, much more to the owners; for the harvest shall be a heap, all in confusion, in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow. The harvest used to be a time of joy, of singing and shouting; (*ch. xvi. 10.*) but this harvest the hungry eat up, (*Job v. 5.*) which makes it a day of grief, and the more, because the plants were pleasant and costly, (*v. 10.*) and their expectations proportionably raised. The harvest had sometimes been a day of grief, if the crop were thin, and the weather unseasonable; and yet in that case there was hope that the next would be better: but this shall be desperate sorrow, for they shall see not only this year's products carried off, but the property of the ground altered, and their conquerors lords of it. The margin reads it, *The harvest shall be removed*, (into the enemy's country or camp, Deut. xxviii. 33.) *in the day of inheritance*, (when thou thoughtest to inherit it,) *and there shall be deadly sorrow*. This is a good reason why we should not lay up our treasure in these things which we may so quickly be spoiled of, but in that good part which shall never be taken away from us.

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



buke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind. 14. And, behold, at evening-tide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.

These verses read the doom of those that spoil and rob the people of God; if the Assyrians and Israelites invade and plunder Judah—if the Assyrian army take God's people captive, and lay their country waste, let them know that ruin will be their lot and portion.

They are here brought in,

1. Triumphant over the people of God. They rely upon their numbers; the Assyrian army was made up out of divers nations, it is the *multitude of many people*, (v. 12.) by which weight they hope to carry the cause; they are very noisy, like the roaring of the seas; they talk big, hector and threaten, to frighten God's people from resisting them, and all their allies from sending in to their aid. Sennacherib and Rabshakeh, in their speeches and letters, made a mighty noise, to strike a terror upon Hezekiah and his people; the nations that followed them, *made a rushing like the rushing of many waters*, and those mighty ones, that threaten to bear down all before them, and carry away every thing that stands in their way: *the floods have lifted up their voice, have lifted up their waves*; such is the tumult of the people, and the heathen, when they rage, Ps. ii. 1.—xciii. 3.

2. Triumphed over by the judgments of God. They think to carry their point by dint of noise; but wo to them, (v. 12.) for he shall rebuke them; God shall, one whom they little think of, have no regard to, stand in no awe of; he shall give them a check with an invisible hand, and then they shall flee afar off. Sennacherib and Rabshakeh, and the remains of their forces, shall run away in a fright, and shall be chased by their own terrors, as the chaff of the mountains which stand bleak before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind, like thistle-down; so the margin; they make themselves *as chaff before the wind*, (Ps. xxxv. 5.) and then the *angel of the Lord*, (as it follows there,) the same angel that slew many of them, shall chase the rest. God will make *them like a wheel*, or rolling thing, and then *persecute them with his tempest*, and *make them afraid with his storm*, Ps. lxxxiii. 13. 15. Note, God can dispirit the enemies of his church when they are most courageous and confident, and dissipate them when they seem most closely consolidated. This shall be done suddenly; (v. 14.) *At evening-tide* they are very troublesome, and threaten trouble to the people of God; but before the morning he is not, at sleeping time they are cast into a deep sleep, Ps. lxxvi. 5, 6. It was in the night that the angel routed the Assyrian army. God can in a moment break the power of his church's enemies, then when it appears most formidable; and this is written for the encouragement of the people of God in all ages, when they find themselves an unequal match for their enemies; for *this is the portion of them that spoil us*, they shall themselves be spoiled. God will plead his church's cause; and they that meddle, do it to their own hurt.

### CHAP. XVIII.

Whatever country it is that is meant here by the *land shadowing with wings*, here is a wo denounced against it, for God has, upon his people's account, a quarrel with it. I. They threaten God's people, v. 1, 2. II. All the neighbours are hereupon called to take notice what will be the issue, v. 3. III. Though God seem unconcerned

in the distress of his people for a time, he will at length appear against their enemies, and will remarkably cut them off, v. 4, 6. IV. This shall redound very much to the glory of God, v. 7.

1. **WO** to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia: 2. That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, *saying*, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled! 3. All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye. 4. For so the LORD said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling-place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. 5. For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning-hooks, and take away and cut down the branches. 6. They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth; and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them. 7. In that time shall the present be brought unto the LORD of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, the mount Zion.

Interpreters are very much at a loss where to find this land that lies beyond the rivers of Cush: some take it to be Egypt, a maritime country, and full of rivers, and which courted Israel to depend upon them, but proved broken reeds; but against this it is strongly objected, that the next chapter is distinguished from this by the title of *the burthen of Egypt*. Others take it to be Ethiopia, and read it, *which lies near, or about, the rivers of Ethiopia*, not that in Africa, which lay in the south of Egypt, but that which we call *Arabia*, which lay east of Canaan, which Tirhakah was now king of. He thought to protect the Jews, as it were, under the *shadow of his wings*, by giving a powerful diversion to the king of Assyria, when he made a descent upon his country, at the time that he was attacking Jerusalem, 2 Kings xix. 9. But, though by his ambassadors he bid defiance to the king of Assyria, and encouraged the Jews to depend upon him, God, by the prophet, slights him, and will not go forth with him; he may take his own course, but God will take another course to protect Jerusalem, while he suffers the attempt of Tirhakah to miscarry, and his Arabian army to be ruined; for the Assyrian shall become a present or sacrifice to the Lord of hosts, and to the place of his name, by the hand of an angel, not by the hand of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, v. 7. This is a very probable exposition of this chapter.

But from a hint of Dr. Lightfoot's in his Harmony of the Old Testament, I incline to understand this

chapter as a prophecy against Assyria; and so a continuation of the prophecy in the three last verses of the foregoing chapter, with which therefore this should be joined. That was against the army of the Assyrians, which rushed in upon Judah, this against the land of Assyria itself, which lay beyond the rivers of Arabia, the rivers of Euphrates and Tigris, which bordered on *Arabia Deserta*. And in calling it *the land shadowing with wings*, he seems to refer to what he himself had said of it, (*ch. viii. 8.*) that *the stretching out of his wings shall fill thy land, O Immanuel*. The prophet might perhaps describe the Assyrians by such dark expressions, not naming them, for the same reason that St. Paul, in his prophecy, speaks of the Roman empire by a periphrasis, *He who now letteth*, 2 Thess. ii. 7. Here is,

I. The attempt made by this land (whatever it is) upon a nation scattered and peeled, *v. 2*. Swift messengers are sent by water to proclaim war against them, as a nation marked by Providence, and meted out, to be trodden under foot. Whether this be the Ethiopians waging war with the Assyrians, or the Assyrians with Judah, it teaches us, 1. That a people which have been terrible from their beginning, have made a figure, and borne a mighty sway, may yet become scattered and peeled, and may be spoiled even by their own rivers that should enrich both the husbandman and the merchant. Nations which have been formidable, and have kept all in awe about them, may, by a concurrence of accidents, become despicable, and an easy prey to their insulting neighbours. 2. Princes and states that are ambitious of enlarging their territories, will still have some pretence or other to quarrel with those whose countries they have a mind to; "It is a nation that has been terrible, and therefore we must be revenged on it; it is now a nation scattered and peeled, meted out and trodden down, and therefore it will be an easy prey for us." Perhaps it is not brought so low as they represent it. God's people are trampled on as a nation scattered and peeled, but whoever think to swallow them up, find them still as terrible as they have been from their beginning; they are cast down, but not deserted, not destroyed.

II. The alarm sounded to the nations about, by which they are summoned to take notice of what God is about to do, *v. 3*. The Ethiopians and Assyrians have their counsels and designs, which they have laid deep, and promise themselves much from, and, in prosecution of them, send their ambassadors and messengers from place to place; but let us now inquire what the great God says to all this: 1. He *lifts up an ensign upon the mountains*, and *blows a trumpet*, by which he proclaims war against the enemies of his church, and calls in all her friends and well-wishers into her service. He gives notice that he is about to do some great work, as *Lord of hosts*. 2. All the world is bid to take notice of it; all the dwellers on earth must see the ensign, and hear the trumpet, must observe the motions of the Divine Providence, and attend the directions of the divine will. Let all enlist under God's banner, and be on his side, and hearken to the trumpet of his word, which gives not an uncertain sound.

III. The assurance God gives to his prophet, by him to be given to his people; though he might seem for a time to sit by an unconcerned spectator, yet he would certainly and seasonably appear for the comfort of his people, and the confusion of his and their enemies; (*v. 4.*) *So the Lord said unto me*. Men will nave their saying, but God also will have his; and as we may be sure his word shall stand, so he often whispers it in the ears of his servants the prophets. When he says, "I will take my rest," it is not as if he were weary of governing the world, or as if

he either needed or desired to retire from it, and repose himself; but it intimates 1. That the great God has a perfect, undisturbed, enjoyment of himself, in the midst of all the tosses and changes of this world; the Lord sits even upon the floods unshaken; the Eternal Mind is always easy. 2. That sometimes he may seem to his people as if he took not wonted notice of what is done in this lower world; they are tempted to think he is *as one asleep*, or *as one astonished*; (Ps. xlv. 23. Jer. xiv. 9.) but even then he knows very well what men do, and what he himself will do.

(1.) He will take care of his people, and be a Shelter to them; he will regard his dwelling-place, his eye and his heart are, and shall be, upon it for good continually. Zion is his rest for ever, where he will dwell; and he will *look after it*; so some read it; he will lift up the light of his countenance upon it, will consider over it what is to be done, and will be sure to do all for the best; he will adapt the comforts and refreshments he provides for them, to the exigencies of their case; and they will *therefore* be acceptable, because seasonable. [1.] Like a clear heat after rain, (so the margin,) which is very reviving and pleasant, and makes the herbs to flourish. [2.] Like a dew and a cloud in the heat of harvest, which are very welcome, the dew to the ground, and the cloud to the labourers. Note, There is that in God, which is a shelter and refreshment to his people in all weathers, and arms them against the inconveniences of every change. Is the weather cool? There is that in his favour, which will warm them. Is it hot? There is that in his favour, which will cool them. Great men have their winter-house and their summer-house; (Amos iii. 15.) but they that are at home with God, have both in him.

(2.) He will reckon with his and their enemies, *v. 5, 6*. When the Assyrian army promises itself a plentiful harvest in the taking of Jerusalem, and the plundering of that rich city, when the bud of that project is perfect, before the harvest is gathered in, while the sour grape of their enmity to Hezekiah and his people is ripening in the flower, and the design is just ready to put in execution, God shall destroy that army as easily as the husbandman cuts off the sprigs of the vine with pruning-hooks, or, because the grape is sour, and good for nothing, and will not be cured, takes away, and cuts down, the branches. This seems to point at the overthrow of the Assyrian army by a destroying angel; when the dead bodies of the soldiers were scattered like the branches and sprigs of a wild vine, which the husbandman has cut to pieces. And they shall be left to the fowls of the mountains, and the beasts of the earth, to prey upon, both winter and summer; for as God's people are protected all seasons of the year, both in cold and heat, (*v. 4.*) so their enemies are at all seasons exposed; birds and beasts of prey shall both summer and winter upon them, till they are quite ruined.

IV. The tribute of praise which should be brought to God from all this, *v. 7*. In that time, when this shall be accomplished, *shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts*. 1. Some understand this of the conversion of the Ethiopians to the faith of Christ in the latter days; of which we have the specimen and beginning in Philip's baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts viii. 27. They that were a people scattered and peeled, meted out, and trodden down, (*v. 2.*) shall be a present to the Lord; and though they seem useless and worthless, they shall be an acceptable present to him who judges of men by the sincerity of their faith and love, not by the pomp and prosperity of their outward condition. *Therefore* the gospel was ministered to the Gentiles, that *the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable*, Rom. xv. 16. It is prophesied (Pe-

lxviii. 31.) that *Ethiopia should soon stretch out her hands unto God*. 2. Others understand it of the spoil of Sennacherib's army, out of which, as usual, presents were brought to the *Lord of hosts*, Num. xxxi. 59. It was the present of a people scattered and peeled. (1.) It was won from the Assyrians, who were now themselves reduced to such a condition as they scornfully described Judah to be in, v. 2. They that unjustly trample upon others, shall themselves be justly trampled upon. (2.) It was offered by the people of God, who were, in disdain, called *a people scattered and peeled*. God will put honour upon his people, though men put contempt upon them. *Lastly*, Observe, the present that is brought to the Lord of hosts, must be brought to the *place of the name of the Lord of hosts*; what is offered to God, must be offered in the way that he has appointed; we must be sure to attend him, and expect him to meet us, there where he records his name.

## CHAP. XIX.

As Assyria was a breaking rod to Judah, with which it was smitten, so Egypt was a broken reed, with which it was cheated; and therefore God had a quarrel with them both. We have before read the doom of the Assyrians, now here we have the burden of Egypt, a prophecy concerning that nation; I. That it should be greatly weakened and brought low, and should be as contemptible among the nations as now it was considerable, rendered so by a complication of judgments which God would bring upon them, v. 1..17. II. That at length God's holy religion should be brought into Egypt, and set up there, in part by the Jews that should fly thither for refuge, but more fully by the preachers of the gospel of Christ, through whose ministry churches should be planted in Egypt in the days of the Messiah, (v. 18..25.) which would abundantly balance all the calamities here threatened.

1. **T**HE burden of Egypt. Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt; and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. 2. And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians; and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. 3. And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof; and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. 4. And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the LORD, the LORD of hosts. 5. And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up. 6. And they shall turn the rivers far away, and the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither. 7. The paper-reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and every thing sown by the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no more. 8. The fishers also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the brooks, shall lament, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish. 9. Moreover, they that work in fine flax,

and weave net-works, shall be confounded. 10. And they shall be broken in the purposes thereof, all that make sluices and ponds for fish. 11. Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings? 12. Where are they? where are thy wise men? and let them tell thee now, and let them know what the LORD of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt. 13. The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Noph are deceived; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof. 14. The LORD hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof; and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit. 15. Neither shall there be any work for Egypt, which the head or tail, branch or rush, may do. 16. In that day shall Egypt be like unto women; and it shall be afraid and fear, because of the shaking of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which he shaketh over it. 17. And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt: every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the LORD of hosts, which he hath determined against it.

Though the land of Egypt had of old been a house of bondage to the people of God, where they had been ruled with rigour, yet among the unbelieving Jews there still remained much of the humour of their fathers, who said, *Let us make a captain, and return into Egypt*. Upon all occasions they trusted to Egypt for help, (ch. xxx. 2.) and thither they fled, in disobedience to God's express command, when things were brought to the last extremity in their own country, Jer. xliii. 7. Rabshakeh upbraided Hezekiah with this, ch. xxxvi. 6. While they kept up an alliance with Egypt, and it was a powerful ally, they stood not in awe of the judgments of God; for against them they depended upon Egypt to protect them. Nor did they depend upon the power of God, when at any time they were in distress; but Egypt was their confidence. To prevent all this mischief, Egypt must be mortified, and many ways God here tells them he will take to do it.

I. The gods of Egypt shall appear to them to be what they always really were, utterly unable to help them; (v. 1.) *The Lord rides upon a cloud, a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt!* as a judge goes in state to the bench to try and condemn the malefactors, or as a general takes the field with his troops to crush the rebels, so shall God come into Egypt with his judgments; and when he comes, he will certainly overcome. In all this burden of Egypt here is no mention of any foreign enemy invading them; but God himself will come against them, and raise up the causes of their destruction from among themselves. He comes upon a *cloud*, above the reach of opposition or resistance. He comes apace, upon a *swift cloud*; for their judgment lingers not, when the time is come. He *rides upon the wings of the wind*, and far excelling the greatest pomp and splendour of earthly princes; he *makes the clouds*

his chariots, Ps. xviii. 9.—*civ. 3.* When he comes, the idols of Egypt shall be moved, shall be removed, at his presence, and perhaps be made to fall, as Dagon did before the ark. Isis, Osiris, and Apis, those celebrated idols of Egypt, being found unable to relieve their worshippers, shall be disowned and rejected by them. Idolatry had got deeper rooting in Egypt than in any land besides, even the most absurd idolatries; and yet now the idols shall be moved, and they shall be ashamed of them. When the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, he *executed judgments upon the gods of the Egyptians*; (Numb. xxxiii. 4.) no marvel then if, when he comes, they begin to tremble. The Egyptians shall seek to the idols, when they are at their wits' end, and consult the *charm-ers and wizards*; (*v. 3.*) but all in vain; they see their ruin hastening on them notwithstanding.

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

III. The Egyptians shall be embroiled in endless dissensions and quarrels among themselves. There shall be no occasion to bring a foreign force upon them to destroy them, they shall destroy one another; (*v. 2.*) *I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians*. As these divisions and animosities are their sin, God is not the Author of them, they come from men's lusts; but God, as a Judge, permits them for their punishment, and by their destroying differences corrects them for their sinful agreements. Instead of helping one another, and acting each in his place for the common good, *they shall fight every one against his brother and neighbour*, whom he ought to love as himself; *city against city, and kingdom against kingdom*. Egypt was then divided into twelve provinces, or dynasties; but Psammetichus, the governor of one of them, by setting them at variance with one another, at length made himself master of them all. A kingdom, thus divided against itself, would soon be brought to desolation. *En quò discordia civis perduxit miseros! —O the wretchedness brought upon a people by their disagreements among themselves!* It is brought to this by a perverse spirit, a spirit of contradiction, which the Lord would mingle as an intoxicating draught made up of several ingredients, for the Egyptians, *v. 14.* One party shall be for a thing, for no other reason than because the other is against it; that is a perverse spirit, which, if it mingle with the public counsels, tends directly to the ruin of the public interests.

IV. Their politics shall be all blasted, and turned into foolishness; when God will destroy the nation, he will *destroy the counsel thereof*, (*v. 3.*) by taking away wisdom from the statesmen, (Job xii. 20.) or setting them one against another, as Hushai and Ahithophel, or, by his providence, breaking their measures even then when they seemed well laid; so

that the *princes of Zoan are fools*, they make fools of one another, every one betrays his own folly, and Divine Providence makes fools of them all, *v. 11.* Pharaoh had his wise counsellors, Egypt was famous for such; but their counsel is all become brutish, they have lost all their forecast, one would think they were become idiots, and were bereaved of common sense. Let no man glory then in his own wisdom, nor depend upon that, or upon the wisdom of those about him; for he that gives understanding, can, when he pleases, take it away. And from them it is most likely to be taken away, that boast of their policy, as Pharaoh's counsellors here did, and, to recommend themselves to places of public trust, boast of their great understanding. "I am the son of the wise, of the God of wisdom, of wisdom itself," says one; "My father was an eminent privy-counsellor of note, in his day, for wisdom;" or of the antiquity and dignity of their families; "I am" (says another) "the son of ancient kings." The nobles of Egypt boasted much of their antiquity, producing fabulous records of their succession for above 10,000 years. This humour prevailed much among them about this time, as appears by Herodotus; their common boast being, that Egypt was some thousands of years more ancient than any other nation. "But *where are thy wise men?*" (*v. 12.*) Let them now show their wisdom by foreseeing what ruin is coming upon their nation, and preventing it, if they can. Let them with all their skill *know what the Lord of hosts has purposed upon Egypt*, and arm themselves accordingly. Nay, so far are they from doing this, that they themselves are, in effect, contriving the ruin of Egypt, and hastening it on, *v. 13.* The princes of Noph are not only deceived themselves, but they have seduced Egypt, by putting their kings upon arbitrary proceedings;" (by which both themselves and their people were soon undone); "the governors of Egypt, that are the stay and corner-stones of the tribes thereof, are themselves undermining it." It is sad with a people when those that undertake for their safety are helping forward their destruction, and the physicians of the state are her worst disease; when the things that belong to the public peace, are so far hid from the eyes of those that are entrusted with the public counsels, that in every thing they blunder, and take wrong measures; so here, (*v. 14.*) *They have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof*; every step they took, was a false step; they always mistook either the end or the means, and their counsels were all instead and uncertain, like the staggerings and stammerings of a drunken man in his vomit, who knows not what he says, nor where he goes. See what reason we have to pray for our privy-counsellors and ministers of state, who are the great supports and blessings of the state, if God give them a spirit of wisdom, but quite contrary, if he hide their heart from understanding.

V. The rod of government shall be turned into the serpent of tyranny and oppression; (*v. 4.*) *The Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord*; not a foreigner, but one of their own, one that shall rule over them by an hereditary right, but shall be a fierce king, and rule them with rigour;" either the twelve tyrants that succeeded Sethon, or rather Psammetichus that recovered the monarchy again; for he speaks of *one cruel lord*. Now the barbarous usage which the Egyptian taskmasters gave to God's Israel long ago, was remembered against them, and they were paid in their own coin by another Pharaoh. It is sad with a people when the powers that should be for edification are for destruction, and they are ruined by those by whom they should be ruled, when such as this is the manner of the king; as it is described, *in terrorem—in order to impress alarm.* 1 Sam. viii. 11.

VI. Egypt was famous for its river Nile, which was its wealth, and strength, and beauty, and was idolized by them. Now it is here threatened, that *the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up, v. 5.* Nature shall not herein favour them as she has done. Egypt was never watered with the rain of heaven, (Zech. xiv. 18.) and therefore the fruitfulness of their country depended wholly upon the overflowing of their river; if that therefore be dried up, their fruitful land will soon be turned into barrenness, and their harvests cease; *Every thing sown by the brooks will wither of course, will be driven away, and be no more, v. 7.* If the paper-reeds by the brooks, at the very mouth of them, wither, much more the corn, which lies at a greater distance, but derives its moisture from them. Yet this is not all; the drying up of their rivers is the destruction, 1. Of their fortifications, for they are *brooks of defence*, (v. 6.) making the country difficult of access to an enemy; deep rivers are the strongest lines, and most hardly forced. Pharaoh is said to be a *great dragon lying in the midst of his rivers*, and guarded by them, bidding defiance to all about him, Ezek. xxix. 3. But these *shall be emptied and dried up*, not by an enemy, as Sennacherib with the *sole of his foot dried up mighty rivers*, (ch. xxxvii. 25.) and as Cyrus, who took Babylon by drawing Euphrates into many streams, but by the providence of God, which sometimes *turns water-springs into dry ground*, Ps. cvii. 33. 2. It is the destruction of their fish, which in Egypt was much of their food, witness that base reflection which the children of Israel made, (Numb. xi. 5.) *We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely.* The drying up of the rivers will *kill the fish*, (Ps. cv. 29.) and that will ruin those who make it their business, (1.) to catch fish, whether by angling or nets; (v. 8.) they shall lament and languish, for their trade is at an end. There is nothing which the children of this world do more heartily lament, than the loss of that which they used to get money by: *Ploratur lacrymis amissa pecunia veris—Those are genuine tears, which are shed over lost money.* (2.) To keep fish, that it may be ready when it is called for. There were those that *made sluices and ponds for fish*, (v. 10.) but they shall be broken in the purposes thereof; their business will fail, either for want of water to fill their ponds, or for want of fish to replenish their waters. God can find ways to deprive a country even of that which is its staple commodity. The Egyptians may themselves remember *the fish they have formerly eaten freely*, but now cannot have for money. And that which aggravates the loss of these advantages by the river, is, that it is their own doings; (v. 6.) *They shall turn the rivers far away.* Their kings and great men, to gratify their own fancy, will drain water from the main river to their own houses and grounds at a distance, preferring their private conveniences before the public, and so by degrees the force of the river is sensibly weakened. Thus many do themselves a greater prejudice at last than they think of; [1.] Who pretend to be wiser than nature, and to do better for themselves than nature has done. [2.] Who consult their own particular interest more than the common good. Such may gratify themselves, but surely they can never satisfy themselves, who, to serve a turn, contribute to a public calamity, which they themselves, at long run, cannot avoid sharing in. Herodotus tells us that Pharaoh-Necho, (who reigned not long after this,) projecting to cut a free passage by water from Nilus into the Red sea, employed a vast number of men to make a ditch or channel for that purpose; in which attempt he impaired the river, lost a hundred and twenty thousand of his people, and yet left the work unaccomplished.

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

VIII. A general consternation shall seize the Egyptians; they shall be *afraid, and fear*, (v. 16.) which will be both an evidence of a universal decay, and a means and presage of utter ruin. Two things will put them into this fright; 1. What they hear from the land of Judah; that shall be a terror to Egypt, v. 17. When they hear of the desolations made in Judah by the army of Sennacherib, considering both the near neighbourhood, and the strict alliance that was between them and Judah, they will conclude it must be their turn next to become a prey to that victorious army. When their neighbour's house was on fire, they could not but see their own danger; and therefore every one of the Egyptians, that makes mention of Judah, shall be afraid in himself, expecting the bitter cup shortly to be put into his hands. 2. What they see in their own land. They shall fear, (v. 16.) *because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts*, and (v. 7.) *because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts*; which, from the shaking of his hand, they shall conclude he has determined against Egypt as well as Judah. For if judgment begin at the house of God, where will it end? *If this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* See here, (1.) How easily God can make those a terror to themselves, that have been not only secure, but a terror to all about them. It is but shaking his hand over them, or laying it upon some of their neighbours, and the stoutest hearts tremble immediately. (2.) How well it becomes us to fear before God, when he does but shake his hand over us, and to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, when it does but threaten us, especially when we see his counsel determined against us; for who can change his counsel?

18. In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of hosts: one shall be called, The city of destruction. 19. In that day there shall be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD. 20. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the LORD because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a sa-

viour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them. 21. And the LORD shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and perform it. 22. And the LORD shall smite Egypt; he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return *even* to the LORD, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them. 23. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria; and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. 24. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, *even* a blessing in the midst of the land; 25. Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.

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

as so great an irregularity, and an affront to the temple at Jerusalem, that we cannot suppose this prophecy to be fulfilled in it.

Observe how the conversion of Egypt is here described.

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

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

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

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

V. Being in distress, they shall seek to God, and he shall be foond of them; and this shall be a sign and a witness for the Lord of hosts, that he is a *God hearing prayer to all flesh that come to him*, v. 20. See Ps. lxx. 2. When they cry to God by reason of their oppressors, the cruel lords that shall *rule over them*, (v. 4.) *he shall be entreated of them*;



(v. 22.) whereas he had told his people Israel, who had made it their own choice to have such a king, that they should *cry to him by reason of their king*, and he *would not hear them*, 1 Sam. viii. 18.

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

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

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

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

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

## CHAP. XX.

This chapter is a prediction of the carrying away of multitudes both of the Egyptians and the Ethiopians into captivity by the king of Assyria. Here is, I. The sign by which this was foretold, which was, the prophet's going, for some time, barefoot and almost naked, like a poor captive, v. 1, 2. II. The explication of that sign, with application to Egypt and Ethiopia, v. 3. . . 5. III. The good use which the people of God should make of this, which is, never to trust in an arm of flesh, because thus it will deceive them, v. 6.

I. IN the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him,) and fought against Ashdod, and took it; 2. At the same time spake the Lord by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go, and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. 3. And the Lord said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia; 4. So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives,

young and old, naked and barefoot, even with *their* buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. 5. And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory. 6. And the inhabitant of this isle shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation, whither we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and how shall we escape?

God here, as King of nations, brings a sore calamity upon Egypt and Ethiopia, but, as King of saints, brings good to his people out of it. Observe,

I. The date of this prophecy; it was in the year that Ashdod, a strong city of the Philistines, (but which some think was lately recovered from them by Hezekiah, when he smote the Philistines even unto Gaza, 2 Kings xviii. 8.) was besieged and taken by an army of the Assyrians; it is uncertain what year of Hezekiah that was, but the event was so remarkable, that they who lived then, could by that token fix the time to a year. He that was now king of Assyria, is called *Sargon*, which some take to be the same with Sennacherib; others think he was his immediate predecessor, and succeeded Shalmaneser. Tartan, who was general, or commander-in-chief, in this expedition, was one of Sennacherib's officers, sent by him to bid defiance to Hezekiah, in concurrence with Rabshakeh, 2 Kings xviii. 17.

II. The making of Isaiah a sign, by his unusual dress, when he walked abroad. He had been a sign to his own people of the melancholy times that were come, and coming, upon them, by the sackcloth which for some time he had worn, of which he had a gown made, which he girt about him. Some think he put himself into that habit of a mourner, upon occasion of the captivity of the ten tribes; others think sackcloth was what he commonly wore as a prophet, to show himself mortified to the world, and that he might learn to endure hardness; soft clothing better becomes those that attend in king's palaces, (Matth. xi. 8.) than those that go on God's errands. Elijah wore hair-cloth, (2 Kings i. 8.) and John Baptist, (Matth. iii. 4.) and those that pretended to be prophets, supported their pretensions by wearing rough garments; (Zech. xiii. 4.) but Isaiah has orders given him to loose his sackcloth from his loins, not to exchange it for better clothing, but for none at all, no upper garment, no mantle, cloak or coat, but only that which was next to him; his shirt, we may suppose, waistcoat, and drawers; and he must put off his shoes, and go barefoot; so that, compared with the dress of others, and what he himself usually wore, he might be said to go naked. This was a great hardship upon the prophet, it was a blemish to his reputation, and would expose him to contempt and ridicule; the boys in the streets would hoot at him; and they who sought occasion against him, would say, *The prophet is indeed a fool, and the spiritual man is mad*, Hos. ix. 7. It might likewise be a prejudice to his health, he was in danger of catching a cold, which might throw him into a fever, and cost him his life; but God bade him do it, that he might give a proof of his obedience to God in a most difficult command, and so shame the disobedience of his people to the most easy and reasonable precepts. When we are in the way of our duty, we may trust God both with our credit and with our safety. The hearts of that people were strangely stupid, and would not be affected with what they heard only, but must be taught by signs, and therefore Isaiah must do this for their edification: if the dress was scandalous, yet the design was glorious, and what a prophet of the Lord needed not to be ashamed of.

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

IV. The use and application of this, v. 5, 6.

1. All that had any dependence upon, or correspondence with Egypt and Ethiopia, should now be ashamed of them, and afraid of having any thing to do with them. Those countries that were in danger of being overrun by the Assyrians, expected that Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, with his numerous forces, should put a stop to the progress of their victorious arms, and be a barrier to his neighbours; and with yet more assurance they gloried that Egypt, a kingdom so famous for policy and prowess, would do their business, would oblige them to raise the siege of Ashdod, and retire with precipitation: but, instead of this, by attempting to oppose him, they do but expose themselves, and make their country a prey to him. Hereupon, all about them are ashamed that ever they promised themselves any advantage from two such weak and cowardly nations, and more afraid now than ever they were of the growing greatness of the king of Assyria, before whom Egypt and Ethiopia proved but as briars and thorns put to stop a consuming fire, which do but make it burn the more strongly. Note, Those who make any creature their expectation and glory, and so put it in the place of God, will, sooner or later, be ashamed of it, and their disappointment in it will but increase their fear. See Ezek. xxix. 6, 7.

2. The Jews in particular should be convinced of their folly in resting upon such broken reeds, and should despair of any relief from them: (v. 6.) *The inhabitants of this Isle*, the land of Judah, situated upon the sea, though not surrounded by it; of this country, so the margin: every one shall now have his eyes opened, and shall say, "*Behold, such is our expectation*, so vain, so foolish, and this is that

which it will come to; we have fled for help to the Egyptians and Ethiopians, and have hoped by them to be delivered from the king of Assyria; but now that they are broken thus, how shall we escape, that are not able to bring such armies into the field as they did?" Note, (1.) Those that confide in creatures will be disappointed, and will be made ashamed of their confidence, *for vain is the help of man, and in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, or the height and multitude of the mountains.* (2.) Disappointment in creature-confidences, instead of driving us to despair, as here, (How shall we escape?) should drive us to God, to whom if we flee for help, our expectation shall not be frustrated.

## CHAP. XXI.

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

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

We had one burthen of Babylon before, (*ch.* 13.) here we have another prediction of its fall; God saw fit thus to possess his people with the belief of this event by line upon line; because Babylon sometimes pretended to be a friend to them, (as *ch.*

xxxix. 1.) and God would hereby warn them not to trust to that friendship, and sometimes was really an enemy to them, and God would hereby warn them not to be afraid of that enmity. Babylon is marked for ruin; and all that believe God's prophets, can, through that glass, see it tottering, see it tumbling, even then when with an eye of sense they see it flourishing, and sitting as a queen.

Babylon is here called *the desert or plain of the sea*, for it was a flat country, and full of lakes, or loughs, (as they call them in Ireland,) like little seas, and was abundantly watered with the many streams of the river Euphrates. Babylon did but lately begin to be famous, Nineveh having outshined it while the monarchy was in the Assyrian hands; but in a little time it became the lady of kingdoms; and before it arrived at that pitch of eminence which it was in Nebuchadnezzar's time, God, by this prophet, plainly foretold its fall, again and again, that his people might not be terrified at its rise, nor despair of relief in due time when they were its prisoners, Job. v. 3. Ps. xxxvii. 35, 36. Some think it is here called a *desert*, because, though it was now a populous city, it should in time be made a desert. And therefore the destruction of Babylon is so often prophesied of by this evangelical prophet, because it was typical of the destruction of the man of sin, the great enemy of the New Testament church, which is foretold in the *Revelation* in many expressions borrowed from these prophecies, which therefore must be consulted and collated by those who would understand the prophecy of that book. Here is,

1. The powerful irruption and descent which the Medes and Persians should make upon Babylon; (*v.* 1, 2.) They will come *from the desert, from a terrible land.* The northern parts of Media and Persia, where their soldiers were mostly bred, was waste and mountainous; terrible to strangers that were to pass through it, and producing soldiers that were very formidable. Elam, (Persia) is summoned to go up against Babylon, and in conjunction with the forces of Media, to besiege it; when God has work of this kind to do, he will find, though it be in a desert, in a terrible land, proper instruments to be employed in it. These forces come as whirlwinds from the south, so suddenly, so strongly, and so terribly: such a mighty noise shall they make, and throw down every thing that stands in their way. As is usual in such a case, some deserters will go over to them, the *treacherous dealers will deal treacherously.* Historians tell us of Gadatas and Gobryas, two great officers of the king of Babylon, that went over to Cyrus, and, being well acquainted with all the avenues of the city, led a party directly to the palace, where Belshazzar was slain: thus with the help of the *treacherous dealers the spoilers spoiled.* Some read it thus, *There shall be a deceiver of that deceiver, Babylon, and a spoiler of that spoiler.* Or, which comes all to one, *The treacherous dealer has found one that deals treacherously, and the spoiler one that spoils,* as it is expounded, *ch.* xxxiii. 1. The Persians shall pay the Babylonians in their own coin; they that by fraud and violence, cheating and plundering, unrighteous wars and deceitful treaties, have made a prey of their neighbours, shall meet with their match, and by the same methods shall themselves be made a prey of.

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

1. To the poor oppressed captives it would be welcome news; for they had been told long ago that Babylon's destroyer would be their deliverer; and therefore when they hear that Elam and Media are coming up to besiege Babylon, *all their sighing will be made to cease; they shall no longer mingle their*

tears with Euphrates' streams, but resume their naps, and smile when they remember Zion, which, before, they wept at the thought of. For the sighing of the needy the God of pity will arise in due time; (Ps. xii. 5.) he will break the yoke from off their neck, will remove the rod of the wicked from off their lot, and so make their sighing to cease.

2. To the proud oppressors it would be a grievous vision, (v. 2.) particularly to the king of Babylon for the time being, and it should seem that he it is who is here brought in, sadly lamenting his inevitable fate; (v. 3, 4.) *Therefore are my loins filled with pain, fangs have taken hold upon me, &c.* which was literally fulfilled in Belshazzar, for that very night in which his city was taken, and himself slain, upon the sight of a hand writing mystic characters upon the wall, *his countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another*, Dan. v. 6. And yet that was but the beginning of sorrows; Daniel's decyphering of the writing could not but increase his terror, and the alarm which immediately followed, of the executioners at the door, would be the completing of it. And those words, *The night of my pleasure has he turned into fear to me*, plainly refer to that aggravating circumstance of Belshazzar's fall, that he was slain on that night when he was in the height of his mirth and jollity, with his cups and concubines about him, and a thousand of his lords reveling with him; that night of his pleasure, when he promised himself an undisturbed, unallayed enjoyment of the most exquisite gratifications of sense, with a particular defiance of God and religion in the profanation of the temple-vessels—that was the night that was turned into all this fear. Let this give an effectual check to vain mirth and sensual pleasures, and forbid us ever to lay the reins on the neck of them—that we know not what heaviness the mirth may end in, nor how soon laughter may be turned into mourning; but this we know, that for all these things God shall bring us into judgment; let us therefore mix trembling always with our joys.

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

IV. A description of the alarm which should be given to Babylon, upon its being forced by Cyrus and Darius. The Lord, in vision, showed the prophet the watchman set in the watch-tower, near the palace, as is usual in times of danger; the king ordered those about him to post a sentinel in the most advantageous place for discovery, and according to the duty of a watchman, let him declare what he sees, v. 6. We read of a watchman thus set to receive intelligence, in the story of David, (2 Sam. xviii. 24.) and in the story of Jehu, 2 Kings ix. 17. This watchman here discovered a chariot with a couple of horsemen attending it, in which we may suppose the commander-in-chief to ride; he then saw another chariot drawn by asses or mules, which were much in use among the Persians, and a chariot drawn by camels, which were likewise much in use among the Medes; so that (as Grotius thinks) these two chariots signify the two nations combined against Babylon; or rather, these chariots come to bring tidings to the palace; compare Jer. li. 31, 32. *One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that*

*his city is taken at one end, while he is revelling at the other end, and knows nothing of the matter.* This watchman, seeing these chariots at some distance, *hearkened diligently with much heed*, to receive the first tidings. And (v. 8.) *he cried, A lion*; this word, coming out of a watchman's mouth, no doubt gave them a certain sound, and every body knew the meaning of it, though we do not know it now. It is likely that it was intended to raise attention; he that has an ear to hear, let him hear, as when a lion roars: or he cried as a lion, very loud and in good earnest; the occasion being very urgent. And what has he to say? 1. He professes his constancy to his post assigned him; *"I stand, my lord, continually upon the watch-tower"*, and have never discovered any thing material, till just now; all seemed safe and quiet." Some make it to be a complaint of the people of God, that they had long expected the downfall of Babylon, according to the prophecy, and it was not yet come; but withal a resolution to continue waiting, as Hab. ii. 1. *I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower*, to see what will be the issue of the present providences. 2. He gives notice of the discoveries he had made; (v. 9.) *Here comes a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen*; a vision representing the enemy's entry into the city with all their force, or the tidings brought to the royal palace of it.

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

VI. Notice is given to the people of God, who were then captives in Babylon, that this prophecy of the downfall of Babylon was particularly intended for their comfort and encouragement, and they might depend upon it, that it should be accomplished in due season, v. 10. Observe, 1. The title the prophet gives them in God's name, *O my threshing, and the corn of my floor*; the prophet calls them *his*, because they were his countrymen, and such as he had a particular interest in and concern for; but he speaks it as from God, and directs his speech to those that were Israelites indeed, the faithful in the land. Note, (1.) The church is God's floor, in which the most valuable fruits and products of this earth are, as it were, gathered together and laid up. (2.) True believers are the corn of God's floor; hypocrites are but as the chaff and straw, which take up a great deal of room, but are of small value, with which the wheat is now mixed, but from which it shall be shortly and for ever separated. (3.) The corn of God's floor must expect to be threshed by afflictions and persecutions. God's Israel of old was afflicted from her youth, often under the plougher's plough, (Ps. cxxix. 3.) and the thresher's flail. (4.) Even then God owns it for his threshing, it is his still; nay, the threshing of it is by his appointment, and under his restraint and direction. The threshers could have no power against it, *but what is given them from above*. 2. The assurance he gives them of the truth of what he had delivered to them, which therefore they might build their hopes upon, *That which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel*, that, and nothing else, that, and no

fiction of fancy or my own, *have I declared unto you.* Note, In all events concerning the church, past, present, and to come, we must have an eye to God, both as the Lord of hosts and as the God of Israel, who has power enough to do any thing for his church, and grace enough to do every thing that is for her good. Let us also diligently notice the words of his prophets, as words received from the Lord. As they dare not smother any thing which he has intrusted them to declare, so they dare not declare any thing as from him, which he has not made known to them, 1 Cor. xii. 23.

11. The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night? 12. The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.

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

1. A question put by an Edomite to the watchman. Some one or other calls out of Seir, somebody that was more concerned for the public safety and welfare than the rest, who were generally careless and secure; as the man of Macedonia, in a vision, desired Paul to come over and help them, (Acts xvi. 9.) so this man of mount Seir, in a vision, desired the prophet to inform and instruct them. He calls not many; it is well there are any, that all are not alike unconcerned about the things that belong to the public peace. Some out of Seir ask advice of God's prophets, and are willing to be taught, when many of God's Israel heed nothing. The question is serious. *What of the night?* It is put to a proper person, the watchman, whose office it is to answer such inquiries: he repeats the question, as one in care, as one in earnest, and desires to have an answer. Note, (1.) God's prophets and ministers are appointed to be watchmen, and we are to look upon them as such. They are as watchmen in the city in a time of peace, to see that all be safe, to knock at every door by personal inquiries; ("Is it locked? Is the fire safe?") to direct those that are at a loss, and check those that are disorderly, Cant. iii. 3.—v. 7. They are as watchmen in the camp in time of war; (Ezek. xxxiii. 7.) they are to take notice of the motions of the enemy, and to give notice of them, to make discoveries, and then give warning; and in this they must deny themselves. (2.) It is our duty to inquire of the watchmen, especially to ask again and again, *What of the night?* For watchmen wake when others sleep. [1.] *What time of the night?* After a long sleep in sin and security, is it not time to rise, high time to awake out of sleep? Rom. xiii. 11. We have a great deal of work to do, a long journey to go; is it

not time to be stirring? "Watchman, what o'clock is it? After a long dark night is there any hopes of the day dawning?" [2.] *What tidings of the night?* What from the night? So some, "What vision has the prophet had to-night? We are ready to receive it." Or rather, "What occurs to-night? What weather is it? What news?" We must expect an alarm, and never be secure; the *day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night*; we must prepare to receive the alarm, and resolve to keep our ground, and then take the first hint of danger, and to our arms presently, to our spiritual weapons.

2. The watchman's answer to this question. The watchman was neither asleep nor dumb; though it was a man of mount Seir that called to him, he was ready to give him an answer; *The morning comes.* He answers, (1.) By way of prediction; "there comes first a morning of light, and peace, and opportunity, you will enjoy one day of comfort more; but afterward comes a night of trouble and calamity." Note, In the course of God's providence, it is usual that morning and night are counter-changed, and succeed each other. Is it night? Yet the morning comes, and the day-spring knows his place, Ps. xxx. 5. Is it day? Yet the night comes also: if there be a morning of youth and health, there will come a night of sickness and old age; if a morning of prosperity in the family, in the public, yet we must look for changes. But God usually gives a morning of opportunity before he sends a night of calamity, that his own people may be prepared for the storm, and others left inexcusable. (3.) By way of excitement; *If ye will inquire, inquire ye.* Note, It is our wisdom to improve the present morning in preparation for the night that is coming after it; "*Inquire, return, come.*" Be inquisitive, be penitent, be willing and obedient." The manner of expression is very observable, but we are put to our choice what we will do; "*If ye will inquire, inquire ye*; if not, it is at your peril; you cannot say but you have a fair offer made you." We are also urged to be at a point; "If you will, say so, and do not stand pausing; what you will do, do quickly, for it is no time to trifle." Those that return and come to God, will find they have a great deal of work to do, and but a little time to do it in, and therefore they have need to be busy.

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

Arabia was a large country, that lay eastward and southward of the land of Canaan; much of it was possessed by the posterity of Abraham. The Dedanim here mentioned, (v. 13.) descended from Dedan, Abraham's son by Keturah; the inhabitants of Tema and Kedar descended from Ishmael, Gen.

xxv. 3, 13, 15. The Arabians generally lived in tents, and kept cattle, were a hardy people, inured to labour; probably the Jews depended upon them as a sort of a wall between them and the more warlike eastern nations; and therefore, to alarm them, they shall hear the *burthen of Arabia*, and see it sinking under its own burthen.

1. A destroying army shall be brought upon them, with a sword, with a *drawn sword*, with a *bow ready bent*, and with all the *grievousness of war*, v. 15. It is probable that the King of Assyria, in some of the marches of his formidable and victorious army, took Arabia in his way, and meeting with little resistance, made an easy prey of them. The consideration of the grievousness of war should make us thankful for the blessings of peace.

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

3. They shall stand in need of refreshment, being ready to perish for want of it, in their flight from the invading army; "O ye inhabitants of the land of Tema," (who probably, were next neighbours to the companies of Dedanim), "*bring ye water*" (so the margin reads it) "*to him that is thirsty, and prevent with your bread those that flee*, for they are objects of your compassion: they do not wander for wandering sake, nor are they reduced to straits by any extravagance of their own, but *they flee from the sword*," Tema was a country where water was sometimes a scarce commodity; (as we find, Job vi. 19.) and we may conclude it would be in a particular manner acceptable to these poor distressed refugees. Let us learn hence, (1.) To look for distress ourselves; we know not what straits we may be brought into before we die. Those that live in cities, may be forced to lodge in forests; and those may know the want of necessary food, who now eat bread to the full. Our mountain stands not so strong but that it may be moved, rises not so high but that it may be scaled. These Arabians would the better bear these calamities, because in their way of living they had used themselves to hardships. (2.) To look with compassion upon those that are in distress, and with all cheerfulness to relieve them, not knowing how soon their case may be ours; "*Bring water to them that are thirsty*, and not only give bread to those that need and ask it, but prevent those with it that have need, give it them unasked." They that do so, shall find it remembered to their praise, as (according to our reading) it is here remembered to the praise of the land of Tema, that they did bring water to the thirsty, and relieved even those that were on the falling side.

4. All that which is the glory of Kedar shall vanish away and fail. Did they glory in their numerous herds and flocks? They shall all be driven away by the enemy. It seems, they were famous above other nations for the use of the bow in battle; but their archers, instead of foiling the enemy, shall fall themselves; and the *residue of their number*, when they are reduced to a small number, shall be diminished; (v. 17.) their mighty, able-bodied men, and men of spirit too, shall become very few; for they being most forward in the defence of their country, were most exposed, and fell first, either by the enemies' sword, or into the enemies' hand. Note, Neither the skill of archers, (though they be ever so good marksmen,) nor the courage of mighty men, can protect a people from the judgments of God, when they come with commission; they rather expose the undertakers. That

is poor glory, which will thus quickly come to nothing.

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

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

## CHAP. XXII.

We are now come nearer home, for this chapter is the *burthen of the valley of vision*, Jerusalem; other places had their burthen for the sake of their being concerned some way or other with Jerusalem, and were reckoned with either as spiteful enemies, or deceitful friends, to the people of God; but now let Jerusalem bear her doom. This chapter concerns, I. The city of Jerusalem itself, and the neighbourhood depending upon it. Here is, 1. A prophecy of the grievous distress they should shortly be brought into, by Sennacherib's invasion of the country, and laying siege to the city, v. 1. 7. 2. A reproof given them for their misconduct in that distress, in two things, (1.) Not having an eye to God in the use of the means of their preservation, v. 8. 11. (2.) not humbling themselves under his mighty hand, v. 12. 14. II. The court of Hezekiah, and the officers of that court: 1. The displacing of Shebna, a bad man, and turning him out of the treasury, v. 15. 19, 25. 2. The preferring of Eliakim to his place, who should do his country better service, v. 20. 24.

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

The title of this prophecy is very observable: it is the *burthen of the valley of vision*, of Judah and



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

Now the *burthen of the valley of vision* here, is that which will not quite ruin it, but frighten it; for it refers not to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, but to the attempt made upon it by Sennacherib, which we had the prophecy of, (*ch.* 10.) and shall meet with the history of, *ch.* 36. It is here again prophesied of, because the desolation of many of the neighbouring countries, which were foretold in the foregoing chapters, were to be brought to pass by the Assyrian army. Now let Jerusalem know, that when the cup is going round, it will be put into her hand, and though it will not be to her a fatal cup, yet it will be a cup of trembling. Here is foretold,

1. The consternation that the city should be in upon the approach of Sennacherib's army. It used to be full of stirs, a city of great trade, people hurrying to and fro about their business, a tumultuous city, populous and noisy; where there is great trade, there is great tumult. It used to be a joyous revelling city, made such by the busy part, and the merry part, of mankind; places of concourse are places of noise. "But what ails thee now, that the shops are quitted, and there is no more walking in the streets and exchange, but *thou art wholly gone up to the house-tops*, (*v.* 1.) to bemoan thyself in silence and solitude, or to secure thyself from the enemy, or to look abroad, and see if any succours come to thy relief, or which way the enemies' motions are." Let both men of business and sportsmen rejoice as though they rejoiced not, for something may happen quickly, which they little think of, that will be a damp to their mirth, and a stop to their business, and send them to watch as a sparrow alone upon the house-top, Ps. cii. 7.

But why is Jerusalem in such a fright? *Her slain men are not slain with the sword*, (*v.* 2.) but, (1.) Slain with famine; so some; for Sennacherib's army having laid the country waste, and destroyed the fruits of the earth, provisions must needs be very scarce and dear in the city, which would be the death of many of the poorer sort of people, who would be constrained to feed on that which was unwholesome. (2.) Slain with fear; they were put into this fright, though they had not a man killed, but were so disheartened themselves, that they seemed as effectually stabbed with fear as if they had been run through with a sword.

2. The inglorious flight of the rulers of Judah,

who fled from far, from all parts of the country, to Jerusalem, (*v.* 6.) fled together, as it were by consent, and were found in Jerusalem, having left their respective cities, which they should have taken care of, to be a prey to the Assyrian army, which, meeting with no opposition, when it *came up against all the defended cities of Judah*, easily took them, *ch.* xxxvi. 1. These rulers were *bound from the bow*; so the word is; they not only quitted their own cities like cowards, but, when they came to Jerusalem, were of no service there, but were as if their hands were tied from the use of the bow, by the extreme distraction and confusion they were in; they trembled, so that they could not draw a bow. See how easily God can dispirit men, and how certainly fear will do it, when the tyranny of it is yielded to.

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

4. The great numbers and strength of the enemy, that should invade their country and besiege their city, *v.* 6, 7. Elam, the Persians, come with their quiver full of arrows, and with chariots of fighting men, and horsemen; Kir, the Medes, muster up their arms, unsheath the sword, and uncover the shield, and get every thing ready for battle, every thing ready for the besieging of Jerusalem; then the choice valleys about Jerusalem, that used to be clothed with flocks, and covered over with corn, shall be full of chariots of war, and at the gate of the city the horsemen shall set themselves in array, to cut off all provisions from going in, and to force their way in. What a condition must the city be in, that was beset on all sides with such an army?

8. And he discovered the covering of Judah, and thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest. 9. Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many; and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool: 10. And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall. 11. Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool: but ye have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect unto

him that fashioned it long ago. 12. And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: 13. And, behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. 14. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts.

What is meant by the covering of Judah, which, in the beginning of this paragraph, is said to be *discovered*, is not agreed. The fenced cities of Judah were a covering to the country; but those being taken by the army of the Assyrians, they ceased to be a shelter; so that the whole country lay exposed to be plundered. The weakness of Judah, its nakedness, and inability to help itself, now appeared more than ever; and thus the covering of Judah was discovered. Its magazines and stores, which had been locked up, were now laid open for the public use. Dr. Lightfoot gives another sense of it, that by this distress into which Judah should be brought, God would discover their covering, unloak their hypocrisy, would show all that was in their heart, as is said of Hezekiah upon another occasion, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. Now they discovered both their carnal confidence, (v. 9.) and their carnal security, v. 13. Thus, by one means or other, the *iniquity of Ephraim will be discovered, and the sin of Samaria*, Hos. vii. 1.

They were now in a great fright, and in this fright they discovered two things much amiss:

I. A great contempt of God's goodness, and his power to help them. They made use of the means they could think of for their own preservation; and it is not *that* that they are blamed for, but, in doing this, they did not acknowledge God. Observe,

1. How careful they were to improve all advantages that might contribute to their safety. When Sennacherib had made himself master of all the defended cities of Judah, and Jerusalem was left as a cottage in a vineyard, they thought it was time to look about them; a council was immediately called, a council of war; and it was resolved to stand upon their defence, and not tamely to surrender. Pursuant to this resolve, they took all the prudent measures they could for their own security. We tempt God, if, in times of danger, we do not the best we can for ourselves. (1.) They inspected the magazines and stores, to see if they were well stocked with arms and ammunition. *They looked to the armour of the house of the forest*, which Solomon built in Jerusalem for an armoury, (1 Kings x. 17.) and thence they delivered out what they had occasion for. It is the wisdom of princes, in time of peace, to provide for war, that they may not have arms to seek when they should use them, and perhaps upon a sudden emergency. (2.) They viewed the fortifications, the *breaches of the city of David*; they walked round the walls, and observed where they were gone to decay, for want of seasonable repairs, or broken by some former attempts made upon them. These breaches were many; the more shame for the house of David, that they suffered the city of David to lie neglected. They had, probably, often seen those breaches; but now they saw them to consider what course to take about them. This good we should get by public distresses, we should be awakened by them to *repair our breaches*, and amend what is amiss. (3.) They made sure of water for the city, and did what they could to de-

prive the besiegers of it; *Ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool*, of which there was, probably, no great store, and of which, therefore, they were the more concerned to be good husbands. See what a mercy it is, that, as nothing is more necessary to the support of human life than water, so nothing is more cheap and common; but it is had indeed when that, as here, is a scarce commodity. (4.) *They numbered the houses of Jerusalem*, that every house might send in their quota of men for the public service, or contribute in money to it; which they raised by a poll, so much a head, or so much a house. (5.) Because private property ought to give way to the public safety, those houses that stood in their way, when the wall was to be fortified, were broken down; which, in such a case of necessity, is no more an injury to the owner, than blowing up houses in case of fire. (6.) They made a ditch between the outer and inner wall, for the greater security of the city; and they contrived to draw the water of the old pool to it, that they might have plenty of water themselves, and might deprive the besiegers of it; for, it seems, that was the project, lest the Assyrian army *should come and find much water*, (2 Chron. xxxii. 4.) and so should be the better able to prolong the siege. If it be lawful to destroy the forage of a country, much more to divert the streams of its waters, for the straitening and starving of an enemy.

2. How regardless they were of God in all these preparations; *but ye have not looked unto the Maker thereof*, of Jerusalem, (the city you are so solicitous for the defence of,) and of all the advantages which nature has furnished it with for its defence; *the mountains round about it*, (Ps. cxxv. 2.) and the rivers, which were such as the inhabitants might turn which way soever they pleased for their convenience. Note, (1.) It is God that made his Jerusalem, and fashioned it long ago, in his counsels. The Jewish writers, upon this place, say, There were seven things which God made before the world; meaning which he had in his eye when he made the world, *the garden of Eden, the law, the just ones, Israel, the throne of glory, Jerusalem, and Messiah the Prince*. The gospel-church has God for its Maker. (2.) Whatever service we do, or endeavour to do, at any time, for God's Jerusalem, it must be with an eye to him as the Maker of it; and he takes it ill if we do not. It is charged upon them here, that they did not look to God. [1.] They did not design his glory, in what they did. They fortified Jerusalem because it was a rich city, and their own houses were in it; not because it was the holy city, and God's house was in it. In all our cares for the defence of the church, we must look more at God's interest in it than at our own. [2.] They did not depend upon him for a blessing upon their endeavours, saw no need of it, and therefore sought not to him for it, but thought their own powers and policies sufficient for them. Of Hezekiah himself it is said, that *he trusted in God*, (2 Kings xviii. 5.) and particularly upon this occasion; (2 Chron. xxxii. 8.) but there were those about him, it seems, who were great statesmen and soldiers, but had little religion in them. [3.] They did not give him thanks for the advantages they had in fortifying their city from the *waters of the old pool*, which were fashioned long ago, as Kishon is called an *ancient river*, Judg. v. 21. Whatever in nature is at any time serviceable to us, we must therein acknowledge the goodness of the God of nature; who, when he fashioned it long ago, fitted it to be so, and according to *whose ordinance it continues to this day*. Every creature is that to us that God makes it to be; and therefore, whatever use it is of to us, we must *look at him that fashioned it*, bless him for it, and use it for him.

II. A great contempt of God's wrath and justice in contending with them, *v.* 12—14. Where observe,

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

2. How contrary they walked to this design of God; (*v.* 13.) *Behold, joy and gladness*, mirth and feasting, all the gaiety and all the jollity imaginable: they were as secure and pleasant as they used to be, as if they had no enemy in their borders, or were in no danger of falling into his hands. When they had taken the necessary precautions for their security, then they set all deaths and dangers at defiance, and resolved to be merry, let come on them what would. They that should have been eating among the mourners, were among the *wine-bibbers, the riotous eaters of flesh*; and observe what they said, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die*. This may refer either to the particular danger they were now in, and the fair warning which the prophet gave them of it, or to the general shortness and uncertainty of human life, and the nearness of death at all times. This was the language of the profane scoffers who *mocked the messengers of the Lord, and misused his prophets*. (1.) They made a jest of dying; "The prophet tells us we must die shortly, perhaps to-morrow, and therefore we should mourn and repent to-day; no, rather *let us eat and drink*, that we may be fattened for the slaughter, and may be in good heart to meet our doom; if we must have a short life, let it be a merry one." (2.) They ridiculed the doctrine of a future state on the other side death; for if there were no such state, the apostle grants there would be something of reason in what they said, 1 Cor. xv. 32. If, when we die, there were an end of us, it were good to make ourselves as easy and merry as we could, while we live; but if *for all these things God shall bring us into judgment*, it is at our peril if we walk in the *way of our heart and the sight of our eyes*, Eccl. xi. 9. Note, A practical disbelief of another life after this, is at the bottom of the carnal security and brutish sensuality, which are the sin and shame and ruin of so great a part of mankind, as of the old world, who were *eating and drinking till the flood came*.

3. How much God was displeased at it; he signified his resentment of it to the prophet, *revealed it in his ears*, to be by him proclaimed upon the house-top; *Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die*, *v.* 14. It shall never be expiated with sacrifice and offering, any more than the iniquity of the house of Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 14. It is a sin against the remedy, a baffling of the utmost means of conviction, and rendering them ineffectual; and therefore it is not likely they should ever repent of it, or have it pardoned. The Chaldees reads it, *It shall not be forgiven you till you die the second*

*death*. Those that walk contrary to God, he will walk contrary to them; with the froward he will show himself froward.

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

We have here a prophecy concerning the displacing of Shebna, a great officer at court, and the preferring of Eliakim to the post of honour and trust that he was in. Such changes are common in the courts of princes, it is therefore strange that so much notice should be taken of it by the prophet here: but by the accomplishment of what was foretold concerning these particular persons, God designed to confirm his word in the mouth of Isaiah concerning other and greater events; and it is likewise to show, that, as God has burthens in store for those nations and kingdoms abroad that are open enemies to his church and people; so he has for those particular persons at home, that are false friends to them, and betray them. It is likewise a confirmation in general of the hand of Divine Providence in all events of this kind, which to us seem contingent, and to depend upon the wills and fancies of princes: *promotion comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the Judge*, Ps. lxxv. 6, 7. It is probable that this prophecy was delivered at the same time with that in the former part of the chapter, and began to be fulfilled before

Sennacherib's invasion; for now Shebna was *over the house*, but then Eliakim was, (*ch. xxxvi. 3.*) and Shebna coming down gradually, was only scribe. Here is,

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

1. A reproof of his pride, vanity, and security; (*v. 16.*) "*What hast thou here, and whom hast thou here? What a mighty noise and bustle dost thou make! What estate hast thou here, that thou wast born to? Whom hast thou here, what relations that thou art allied to? Art thou not of mean and obscure origin, filius populi—an utter plebeian, that comest we know not whence? What is the meaning of this then, that thou hast built thee a fine house, hast graved thee a habitation?*" So very nice and curious was it, that it seemed rather to be the work of an engraver than of a mason or carpenter. And it seemed engraven in a rock; so firmly was it founded, and so improprieable was it. "Nay, thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre;" as if he designed that his pomp should survive his funeral. Though Jerusalem was not the *place of his fathers' sepulchres*, (as Nehemiah called it with a great deal of tenderness, *Neh. ii. 3.*) he designed it should be the place of his own; and therefore set up a monument for himself in his lifetime, set it up on high. They that make stately monuments for their pride, forget that, how beautiful soever they appear outwardly, within *they are full of dead men's bones*; but it is pity that the grave-stone should forget the grave.

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

(1.) That he should now quickly be displaced and degraded; (*v. 19.*) *I will drive thee from thy station.* High places are slippery places; and those are justly deprived of their honour, that are proud of it, and puffed up with it: and deprived of their power, that do hurt with it. God will do it who shows himself to be God, by *looking upon proud men, and abasing them*, *Job xl. 12.* To this, *v. 25.* refers. The nail that is *now fastened in the sure place*, Shebna, who thinks himself immovably fixed in his office, *shall be removed, and cut down, and fall.* These are mistaken, who think any place in this world a sure place, or themselves as nails fastened in it; for there is nothing here but uncertainty. When the nail falls, the burthen that was upon it is cut off: when Shebna was disgraced, all that had a

dependence upon him fell into contempt too. Those that are in high places will have many hanging upon them, as favourites whom they are proud of and trust to; but they are burthens upon them, and perhaps with their weight break the nail, and both fall together, and by deceiving ruin one another—the common fate of great men and their flatterers, who expect more from each other than either performs.

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

II. The prophecy of Eliakim's advancement, *v. 20, &c.* He is God's servant, has approved himself faithfully so in other employments, and therefore God will call him to this high station. These that are diligent in doing the duty of a low sphere, stand fairest for preferment in God's books. Eliakim does not undermine Shebna, or make an interest against him, nor does he intrude into his office; but God calls him to it; and what God calls us to, we may expect he will own us in.

It is here foretold,

1. That Eliakim should be put into Shebna's place of lord chamberlain of the household, lord treasurer, and prime minister of state. The prephet must tell Shebna this; (*v. 21.*) "He shall have thy robe, the badge of honour: and thy girdle, the badge of power; for he shall have thy government." To hear of it would be a great mortification to Shebna, much more to see it. Great men, especially if proud men, cannot endure their successors. God undertakes the doing of it, not only because he would put it into the heart of Hezekiah to do it, and his hand must be acknowledged, guiding the hearts of princes in placing and displacing men. (*Prov. xxi. 1.*) but because the powers that are subordinate as well as supreme, are ordained of God. It is God that clothes princes with their robes, and therefore we must submit ourselves to them for the Lord's sake, and with an eye to him, *1 Pet. ii. 13.* And since it is he that *commits the government into their hand*, they must administer it according to his will, for his glory; they must judge for him, by whom they judge, and *decree justice*, *Prov. viii. 15.* And they may depend upon him to furnish them for

what he calls them to: according to the promise here, *I will clothe him*; and then it follows, *I will strengthen him*. Those that are called to places of trust and power, should seek unto God for grace to enable them to do the duty of their places, for that ought to be their chief care.

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

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

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

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

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

Eliakim being preferred, *all the glory of his father's house* was hung upon him; they all made their court to him, and his brethren's sheaves bowed to his. Observe, the glory of this world gives a man no intrinsic worth or excellency; it is but hung upon him as an appurtenance, and it will soon drop from him. Eliakim was compared to *a nail in a sure place*; in pursuance of which comparison, all the

relations of his family, which, it is likely, were numerous, and that was the glory of it, are said to have a dependence upon him; as in a house the vessels that have handles to them, are hung up upon nails and pins. It intimates likewise, that he shall generously take care of them all, and bear the weight of that care, as all the vessels, not only the flagons, but the cups, the vessels of small quantity, the meanest that belonged to his family, shall be provided for by him. See what a burthen they bring upon themselves, that undertake great trusts; they little think how many and how much will hang upon them, if they resolve to be faithful in the discharge of their trust. Our Lord Jesus having the key of the house of David, is *as a nail in a sure place*, and *all the glory of his father's house* hangs upon him, is derived from him, and depends upon him; even the meanest that belong to his church, are welcome to him, and he is able to bear the stress of them all. That soul cannot perish, nor that concern fall to the ground, though ever so weighty, that is by faith hung upon Christ.

## CHAP. XXIII.

This chapter is concerning Tyre, an ancient wealthy city, situated upon the sea, and for many ages one of the most celebrated cities for trade and merchandise in those parts of the world. The lot of the tribe of Asher bordered upon it; (Joshua xix. 29.) it is called the *strong city Tyre*. We seldom find it a dangerous enemy to Israel, but sometimes their faithful ally, as in the reigns of David and Solomon; for trading cities maintain their grandeur, not by conquests of their neighbours, but by commerce with them. In this chapter is foretold, 1. The lamentable desolation of Tyre, which was performed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldean army, about the time that they destroyed Jerusalem; and a hard task they had of it, as appears, Ezek. xxix. 13, where they are said to have *served a hard service against Tyre*, and yet to have no wages, v. 1. 14. 11. The restoration of Tyre after 70 years, and the return of the Tyrians out of their captivity to their trade again, v. 15. 18.

1. **T**HE burden of Tyre. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in: from the land of Chittim it is revealed to them. 2. Be still, ye inhabitants of the isles; thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished. 3. And by great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, is her revenue; and she is a mart of nations. 4. Be thou ashamed, O Zidon; for the sea hath spoken, *even* the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, *nor* bring up virgins. 5. As at the report concerning Egypt, *so* shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre. 6. Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle. 7. *Is* this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn. 8. Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth? 9. The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, *and* to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth. 10. Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish

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

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

1. Tyre flourishing. This is taken notice of, that her fall may appear the more dismal; 1. The merchants of Zidon, who traded at sea, had at first replenished her, v. 2. Zidon was the more ancient city, situate upon the same sea-coast, a few leagues more to the north, and Tyre was at first only a colony of that; but the daughter had outgrown the mother, and was become much more considerable. It may be a mortification to great cities to think how they were at first replenished. 2. Egypt had helped very much to raise her, v. 3. Sihor was the river of Egypt, by that river, and the ocean into which it ran, the Egyptians traded with Tyre: and the harvest of that river was her revenue. The riches of the sea, and the gains by goods exported and imported, are as much the harvest to trading towns, as that of hay and corn is to the country; and sometimes the harvest of the river proves a better revenue than the harvest of the land. Or, it may be meant of all the products of the Egyptian soil, which the men of Tyre traded in, and which were the harvest of the river Nile, owing themselves to the overflowing of that river. 3. She was become the mart of the nations; the great emporium of that part of the world. Some of every known nation might be found there, especially at certain times of the year, when there was a general rendezvous of merchants. This is enlarged upon by another prophet, Ezek. xxvii. 2, 3, &c. See how the hand of the diligent, by the blessing of God upon it, makes rich. Tyre became rich and great by industry, though she had no other ploughs going than those that plough the waters. 4. She was a joyous city, noted for mirth and jollity, v. 7. Those that were so disposed, might find there all manner of sports and diversions, all the delights of the sons and daughters of men; balls, and plays, and operas, and every thing of that kind, that a man had a fancy to. This made them secure and proud, and they despised the country people, who neither knew nor relished any joys of that nature: and this made them very loath to believe and consider what warnings God gave them by his servants; they were too merry to mind them. Her antiquity likewise was of ancient days, and she was proud of that, and that helped to make her secure; as if because she had been a city time out of mind, and her antiquity had been of ancient days, therefore she must continue a city time without end, and her continuance must be to the days of eternity. 5. She was a crowning city, (v. 8.) that crowned herself. Such were the power and pomp of her magistrates, that they crowned those

who had dependence on her, and dealings with her. It is explained in the following words; *Her merchants are princes*, and live like princes, for the ease and state they take; and her traffickers, whatever country they go to, are the honourable of the earth, who are respected by all. How slightly soever some now speak of tradesmen, it seems, formerly, and among the wisest nations, there were merchants, and traders, and men of business, that were the honourable of the earth.

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

See how the destruction of Tyre is here foretold:

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

2. The inhabitants are struck with astonishment. Tyre was an island; the inhabitants of it, who had made a mighty noise and bustle in the world, had revelled with loud huzzas, shall now be still and silent; (v. 2.) they shall sit down as mourners, so overwhelmed with grief, that they shall not be able to express it. Their proud boasts of themselves, and defiance of their neighbours, shall be silenced. God can soon quiet those, and strike them dumb, that are the noisy, busy people of the world. Be still; for God will do his work, (Ps. xlii. 10. Zech. ii. 13.) and you cannot resist him.

3. The neighbours are amazed, blush, and are in pain for them; Zidon is ashamed, (v. 4.) by whom Tyre was at first replenished, for the rolling waves of the sea brought to Zidon this news from Tyre; and there the strength of the sea, a high spring-tide, proclaimed, saying, "*I travail not, nor bring forth children*, now as I have done. I do not now bring ship loads of young people to Tyre, to be bred up there in trade and business, as I used to do;" which was the thing that had made Tyre so rich and populous. Or, the sea, that used to be loaded with fleets of ships about Tyre, shall now be as desolate as a sorrowful widow that is bereaved of all her children, and has none about her to nourish and bring up. Egypt indeed was a much larger and more considerable kingdom than Tyre was; and yet Tyre had so large a correspondence, upon the account of trade, that all the nations about shall be as much in pain, upon the report of the ruin of that one city, as they would have been, and, not long after, were, upon the report of the ruin of all Egypt, v. 5. Or, as some read it, *When the report shall reach to the Egyptians, they shall be sorely pained to hear it of Tyre*; both because of the loss of their trade with



that city, and because it was a threatening step toward their own ruin; when their neighbour's house was on fire, their own was in danger.

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

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

6. Many of those that attempted to escape should be pursued, and fall into the hands of the enemy. Tyre shall *pass through her land as a river,* (v. 10.) running down, one company after another, into the ocean or abyss of misery. Or, though they hasten away as a river, with the greatest swiftness, hoping to outrun the danger, yet *there is no more strength,* they are quickly tired, and cannot get forward, but fall an easy prey into the hands of the enemy. And as Tyre has no more strength, so her sister Zidon has no more comfort; (v. 12.) "*Thou shalt no more rejoice, O oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon,* that art now ready to be overpowered by the victorious Chaldeans; thy turn is next, therefore *arise, pass over to Chittim;* flee to Greece, to Italy, any whither, to shift for thy own safety; yet *there also shalt thou have no rest;* thine enemies shall disturb thee, and thine own fears shall disquiet thee, there where thou hopdest to find some repose." Note, We deceive ourselves, if we promise ourselves rest any where in this world. Those that are uneasy in one place, will be so in another; and when God's judgments pursue sinners, they will overtake them.

But whence shall all this trouble come?

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

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

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

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

(2.) The Chaldeans shall be the instruments of it; (v. 13.) *Behold the land of the Chaldeans;* how easily they and their land were destroyed by the Assyrians. Though their own hands founded it, set up the towers of Babylon, and raised up its palaces, yet he, the Assyrian, brought it to ruin; whence the Tyrians might infer, that as easily as the old Chaldeans were subdued by the Assyrians, so easily shall Tyre be vanquished by those new Chaldeans. Babel was built by the Assyrian, for them that dwell in the wilderness. It may be rendered, *for the ships.* The Assyrians founded it for ships, and ship-men that traffic upon those vast rivers Tigris and Euphrates to the Persian and Indian seas; *for men of the desert;* for Babylon is called the *desert of the sea,* ch. xxi. 1. Thus Tyrus was built upon the sea for the like purpose. But the Assyrians (says Dr. Lightfoot) brought that to ruin, now lately, in Hezekiah's time, and so shall Tyre, hereafter, be brought to ruin by Nebuchadnezzar. If we looked more upon the falling and withering of others, we should not be so confident as we commonly are of the continuance of our own flourishing and standing.

15. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as a harlot. 16. Take a harp, go about the city,

thou harlot that hast been forgotten: make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered. 17. And it shall come to pass, after the end of seventy years, that the LORD will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth. 18. And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the LORD: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.

Here is,

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

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

1. That God's providence shall again smile upon this ruined city; (*v. 17.*) *The Lord will visit Tyre in mercy*; for though he contend, he will not contend for ever. It is not said, Her old acquaintance shall visit her, the colonies she has planted, and the trading cities she has had correspondence with; they have forgotten her; but, The Lord shall visit her by some unthought-of turn; he shall cause his indignation toward her to cease, and then things will run, of course, in their former channel.

2. That she shall use her best endeavours to recover her trade again. She shall sing as a harlot, that has been some time under correction for her lewdness: but, when she is set at liberty, (so violent is the bent of corruption,) she will use her old arts of temptation. The Tyrians being returned from their captivity, and those that remained recovering new spirits thereupon, they shall contrive how to force a trade, shall procure the best choice of goods, undersell their neighbours, and be obliging to all customers; as a harlot that has been forgotten, when she comes to be spoken of again, recommends herself to company by singing and playing; takes a harp, goes about the city, perhaps in the night, serenading, makes sweet melody, and sings many songs. These are innocent and allowable diversions, if soberly and moderately and modestly used; but those that are attached to them should not be over fond of them, nor ambitious to excel in them;

because, whatever they are now, anciently they were some of the baits with which harlots used to entice fools. Tyre shall now by degrees come to be the mart of nations again; she shall return to her hire, to her traffic, and shall commit fornication: she shall have dealings in trade (for she carries on the similitude of a harlot) with all the kingdoms of the world, that she had formerly traded with in her prosperity. The love of worldly wealth is a spiritual whoredom, and therefore covetous people are called *adulterers* and *adulteresses*, (James iv. 4.) and covetousness is spiritual idolatry.

3. That, having recovered her trade again, she shall make a better use of it than she had done formerly; and this good she should get by her calamities, (*v. 18.*) *Her merchandise, and her hire, shall be holiness to the Lord.* The trade of Tyre, and all the gain of her trade, shall be devoted to God and to his honour, and employed in his service. It shall not be treasured and hoarded up, as formerly, to be the matter of their pride, and the support of their carnal confidence; but it shall be laid out in acts of piety and charity. What they can spare from the maintenance of themselves and their families, *shall be for them that dwell before the Lord*, for the priests, the Lord's ministers that attend in his temple at Jerusalem; not to maintain them in pomp and grandeur, but that they and theirs may eat sufficiently, may have food convenient for them, with as little as may be of that care which would divert them from their ministration; and that they may have, not rich and fine clothing, but durable clothing, that which is strong and lasting; *clothing for old men*; so some read it; as if the priests, though they were young, must wear such plain, grave clothing as old men used to wear. Now, (1.) This supposes that religion should be set up in New Tyre, that they should come to the knowledge of the true God, and into communion with the Israel of God. Perhaps their being fellow-captives with the Jews in Babylon, (who had prophets with them there,) disposed them to join with them in their worship there, and turned them from idols, as it cured the Jews of their idolatry; and when they were released with them, and, as they had reason to believe, for their sakes, when they were settled again in Tyre, they would send gifts and offerings to the temple, and presents to the priests. We find men of Tyre then dwelling in the land of Judah, Neh. xiii. 16. Tyre and Sidon were better disposed to religion in Christ's time, than the cities of Israel, for if Christ had gone among them, *they would have repented*, Matth. xi. 21. And we meet with Christians at Tyre, (Acts xxi. 3.) and, many years after, did Christianity flourish there. Some of the rabbins refer this prophecy of the conversion of Tyre to the days of the Messiah. (2.) It directs those that have estates, to make use of them in the service of God and religion, and to reckon that best laid up, which is so laid out. Both the merchandise of the tradesman, and the hire of the day-labourers, shall be devoted to God. Both the merchandise, (the employment we follow,) and the hire, (the gain of our employment,) must be holiness to the Lord; alluding to the motto engraven on the frontlet of the High-Priest, (Exod. xxxix. 30.) and to the separation of the tithes under the law, Lev. xxvii. 30. See a promise like this referring to gospel-times, Zech. xiv. 20, 21. We must first give up ourselves to be holiness to the Lord, before what we do, or have, or get, can be so. When we abide with God in our particular callings, and do common actions after a godly sort, when we abound in works of piety and charity, are liberal in relieving the poor, and supporting the ministry, and encouraging the gospel, then our merchandise and our hire are holiness to the Lord, if we sincerely look at his glory in it. And it need not

be treasured and laid up on earth; for it is treasured and laid up in heaven, in *bags that wax not old*, Luke xii. 33.

## CHAP. XXIV.

It is agreed that here begins a new sermon, which is continued to the end of ch. xxvii. And in it, the prophet, according to the directions he had received, does, in many precious promises, say to the righteous, *It shall be well with them*; and, in many dreadful threatenings, he says, *Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them*; (ch. iii. 10, 11.) and these are interwoven, that they may illustrate each other. This chapter is, mostly, threatening; and as the judgments threatened are very sore and grievous ones, so the people threatened with those judgments, are very many. It is not the burthen of any particular city or kingdom, as those before, but the burthen of the whole earth. The word indeed signifies only the land, because our own land is commonly to us as all the earth. But it is here explained by another word that it is not so confined, it is *the world*, v. 4. So that it must, at least, take in a whole neighbourhood of nations. 1. Some think (and very probably) that it is a prophecy of the great havoc that Sennacherib and his Assyrian army should now shortly make of many of the nations in that part of the world. 2. Others make it to point at the like devastations which, about 100 years after, Nebuchadnezzar and his armies should make in the same countries; going from one kingdom to another, not only to conquer them, but to ruin them, and lay them waste; for that was the method which those eastern nations took in their wars. The promises that are mixed with the threatenings, are intended for the support and comfort of the people of God in those very calamitous times. And since here are no particular nations named, either by whom, or on whom, those desolations should be brought, I see not but it may refer to both these events. Nay, the scripture has many fulfillings, and we ought to give it its full latitude; and therefore I incline to think that the prophet, from those and the like instances which he had a particular eye to, designs here to represent in general the calamitous state of mankind, and the many miseries which human life is liable to, especially those that attend the wars of the nations. Surely the prophets were sent, not only to foretell particular events, but to form the minds of men to virtue and piety, and for that end their prophecies were written and preserved, even for our learning, and therefore ought not to be looked upon as of private interpretation. Now, since a thorough conviction of the vanity of the world, and its insufficiency to make us happy, will go far toward bringing us to God, and drawing out our affections towards another world, the prophet here shows what vexation of spirit we must expect to meet with in these things, that we may never take up our rest in them, nor promise ourselves satisfaction any where short of the enjoyment of God. In this chapter, we have, I. A threatening of desolating judgments for sin; (v. 1. . 12.) to this is added an assurance, that, in the midst of them, good people should be comforted, (v. 13. . 16.) II. A further threatening of the like desolations, (v. 16. . 22.) to which is added an assurance, that, in the midst of all, God should be glorified.

1. **B**EHOLD, the LORD maketh the earth empty; and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. 2. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. 3. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word. 4. The earth mourneth, and fadeth away; the world languisheth, and fadeth away; the haughty people of the earth do languish. 5. The

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

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

I. The earth is stripped of all its ornaments, and looks as if it were taken off its basis; it is made empty and waste, (v. 1.) as if it were reduced to its first chaos, *Tohu* and *Bohu*, nothing but confusion and emptiness again, (Gen. i. 2.) *without form and void*. It is true, earth sometimes signifies the land, and so the same word *Eretz* is here translated; (v. 3.) *The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled*; but I see not why it should not there, as well as v. 1. be translated the earth; for most commonly, if not always, where it signifies some one particular land, it has something joined to it, or, at least, not far from it, which does so appropriate it; as, the land (or earth) of Egypt, or Canaan; or this land, or ours, or yours, or the like. It might indeed refer to some particular country, and an ambiguous word might be used to warrant such an application; for it is good to apply to ourselves, and our own lands, what the scripture says in general, of the vanity and vexation of spirit that attend all things here below; but it should seem designed to speak what often happens to many countries, and will do while the world stands, and what may, we know not how soon, happen to our own, and what is the general character of all earthly things, they are empty of all solid comfort and satisfaction, a little thing makes them waste. We often see numerous families, and plentiful estates, utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled, by one judgment or other, or perhaps only by a gradual and insensible decay. Sin has turned the earth upside down; the earth is become quite a different thing to man from what it was when God made it to be his habitation. Sin has also scattered abroad the inhabitants thereof; the rebellion at Babel was the occasion of the dispersion there. How many ways are there in which the inhabitants both of towns and of private houses are scattered abroad, so that near relations and old neighbours know nothing of one another! To the same purport, v. 4. *The earth mourns, and fades away*; it disappoints those that placed their happiness in it, and raised their expectations high from it, and proves not what they promised themselves it would be; *The whole world languishes and fades away*, as hastening toward a dissolution. It is, at the best, like a flower, which withers in the hands of those that please

themselves too much with it, and lay it in their bosoms. And as the earth itself grows old, so they that dwell therein are desolate; men carry crazy, sickly bodies along with them, are often solitary, and confined by affliction, *v.* 6. When the earth languishes, and is not so fruitful as it used to be, then they that dwell therein, that make it their home, and rest, and portico, are desolate; whereas they that by faith dwell in God, can rejoice in him, even when the fig-tree does not blossom. If we look abroad, and see in how many places pestilences and burning fevers rage, and what multitudes are swept away by them in a little time, so that sometimes the living scarcely suffice to bury the dead, perhaps we shall understand what the prophet means, when he says, *The inhabitants of the earth are burned, or consumed, some by one disease, others by another, and there are but few men left, in comparison.* Note, The world we live in is a world of disappointment, a vale of tears, and a dying world; and the children of men in it are but of few days, and full of trouble.

II. It is God that brings all these calamities upon the earth; the Lord that made the earth, and made it fruitful and beautiful, for the service and comfort of man, now makes it empty and waste; (*v.* 1.) for its Creator is, and will be, its Judge; he has an incontestable right to pass sentence upon it, and an irresistible power to execute that sentence. It is the Lord that has spoken this word, and he will do the work; (*v.* 3.) it is his curse that has *devoured the earth*, (*v.* 6.) the general curse which sin brought upon the ground for man's sake, (*Gen.* iii. 17.) and all the particular curses which families and countries bring upon themselves by their enormous wickedness. See the power of God's curse, how it makes all empty, and lays all waste; those whom he curses, are cursed indeed.

III. Persons of all ranks and conditions shall share in these calamities; (*v.* 2.) *It shall be, as with the people, so with the priest, &c.* This is true of many of the common calamities of human life; all are subject to the same diseases of body, sorrows of mind, afflictions in relations, and the like; there is one event to those of very different stations; time and chance happen to them all. It is in a special manner true of the destroying judgments which God sometimes brings upon sinful nations; when he pleases, he can make them universal, so that none shall escape them, or be exempt from them; whether men have little or much, they shall lose it all. Those of the meaner rank smart first by famine; but those of the higher rank go first into captivity, while the poor of the land are left. It should be all alike, 1. With high and low; *As with the people, so with the priest, or prince.* The dignity of magistrates and ministers, and the respect and reverence owing to both, shall not secure them; *the faces of elders are not honoured*, *Lam.* v. 12. The priests had been as corrupt and wicked as the people; and if their character serve not to restrain them from sin, how can they expect it should serve to secure them from judgments? In both, it is like *people, like priest*, *Hosea* iv. 8, 9. 2. With bond and free; *As with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress*; they have all corrupted their way, and therefore will all be made miserable when the earth is made waste. 3. With rich and poor; those that have money beforehand, that are purchasing, and letting out money to interest, will fare no better than those that are so impoverished, that they are forced to sell their estates, and take up money at interest. There are judgments short of the great day of judgment, in which rich and poor meet together. Let not those that are advanced in the world, set their inferiors at too great a distance, because they know not how soon they may

be set upon a level with them. The rich man's wealth is his strong city, in his own conceit; but it does not always prove so.

IV. It is sin that brings these calamities upon the earth; *Therefore* the earth is made empty, and fades away, because it is *defiled under the inhabitants thereof*; (*v.* 5.) it is polluted by the sins of men, and therefore it is made desolate by the judgments of God. Such is the filthy nature of sin, that it defiles the earth itself under the sinful inhabitants thereof, and it is rendered unpleasant in the eyes of God and good men. See *Lev.* xviii. 25, 27, 28. Blood, in particular, defiles the land, *Numb.* xxxv. 33. The earth never spues out its inhabitants, till they have first defiled it by their sins. Why, what have they done? 1. They have transgressed the laws of their creation, not answered the ends of it: the bonds of the law of nature have been broken by them, and they have cast from them the cords of their obligations to the God of nature. 2. They have changed the ordinances of revealed religion, those of them that have had the benefit of that. *They have neglected the ordinances*; so some read it; and have made no conscience of observing them; they have passed over the laws, in the commission of sin, and have passed by the ordinance, in the omission of duty. 3. Herein they have broken the everlasting covenant, which is a perpetual bond, and will be to those that keep it a perpetual blessing. It is God's wonderful condescension, that he is pleased to deal with men in a covenant-way; to do them good, and thereby oblige them to do him service. Even those that had no benefit by God's covenant with Abraham, had benefit by his covenant with Noah and his sons, which is called *an everlasting covenant*, his covenant with day and night; but they observe not the precepts of the sons of Noah, they acknowledge not God's goodness in the day and night, nor study to make him any grateful returns, and so break the everlasting covenant, and defeat the gracious designs and intentions of it.

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

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

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

Two things are made use of to excite and express vain mirth, and the jovial crew is here deprived of both; (1.) Drinking; the new wine mourns, it is grown sour for want of drinking; for, how proper soever it may be for the heavy heart, (*Prov.* xxxi. 6.) it does not relish then as it does to the merry-hearted: the vine languishes, and gives little hopes of a vintage, and therefore the merry-hearted do sigh; for they know no other gladness than that of their corn and wine and oil increasing, (*Ps.* iv. 7., and if you *destroy their vines and their fig-trees, you make all their mirth to cease*, *Hos.* ii. 11, 12. They shall not now *drink wine with a song*, as they used to do, and with huzzas; but rather drink it with a sigh: nay, *Strong drink shall be bitter to them than*

drink it, because they cannot but mingle their tears with it; or, through sickness, they have lost the relish of it. God has many ways to imbitter wine and strong drink to them that love them, and have the highest gust of them: distemper of body, anguish of mind, the ruin of the estate or country, will make the strong drink bitter, and all the delights of sense tasteless and insipid. (2.) Music; *The mirth of tabrets ceases, and the joy of the harp, which used to be at their feasts, ch. v. 12.* The captives in Babylon hung their harps on the willow trees. In short, all joy is darkened, there is not a pleasant look to be seen, nor has any one power to force a smile; *all the mirth of the land is gone, (v. 11.)* and if it were that mirth which Solomon calls *madness*, there is no great loss of it.

VI. The cities will in a particular manner feel from these desolations of the country; (v. 10.) *The city of confusion is broken, is broken down;* so we read it; it lies exposed to invading powers, not only by the breaking down of its walls, but by the confusion that the inhabitants are in; every house is shut up; perhaps by reason of the plague, which has burned or consumed the inhabitants, so that there are few men left, v. 6. Houses infected are usually shut up, that no man may come in: or, they are shut up because they are deserted and uninhabited. There is a crying for wine, for the spoiling of the vintage, so that there is likely to be no wine. In the city, in Jerusalem itself, that had been so much frequented, there shall be left nothing but desolation; grass shall grow in the streets, and *the gate is smitten with destruction; (v. 12.)* all that used to pass and repass through the gate, are smitten, and all the strength of the city is cut off. How soon can God make a city of order a city of confusion, and then it will soon be a city of desolation!

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

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

Observe, 1. The small number of this remnant: (v. 13.) when all goes to ruin, there shall be as the shaking of an olive-tree, and the gleanings-grapes, here and there one, who shall escape the common calamity, (as Noah and his family, when the old world was drowned,) that shall be able to sit down upon a heap of the ruins of all their creature-comforts, and even then rejoice in the Lord, (Hab. iii. 16—18.) who, when all faces gather blackness, can *lift up their heads with joy, Luke xxi. 26, 28.* These

few are dispersed, and at a distance from each other, like the gleanings of the olive-tree; and they are concealed, hid under the leaves. The Lord only knows them that are his, the world does not.

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

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

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

foundations of the earth do shake. 19. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. 20. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. 21. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.* 22. And they shall be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. 23. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients, gloriously.

These verses, as those before, plainly speak,

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

II. Terror to sinners; the prophet, having comforted himself and others with the prospect of a saved remnant, returns to lament the miseries he saw breaking in like a mighty torrent upon the earth; "*But I said, My leanness, my leanness, swo unto me,* (v. 16.) the very thought of it frets me, and makes me lean." He foresees,

1. The prevalency of sin, that iniquity should abound; (v. 16.) *The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously*; this is itself a judgment, and that which provokes God to bring other judgments. (1.) Men are false to one another; there is no faith in man, but a universal dishonesty. Truth, that sacred bond of society, is departed, and there is nothing but treachery in men's dealings. See Jer. ix. 1, 2. (2.) They are all false to their God; as to him, and their covenant with him, the children of men are all treacherous dealers, and have dealt very treacherously with their God, in departing from their allegiance to him: this is the original, and this the aggravation of the sin of the world; and when men have been false to their God, how should they be true to any other?

2. The prevalency of wrath and judgment for that sin:

(1.) The inhabitants of the earth will be pursued from time to time, from place to place, by one mischief or other; (v. 17, 18.) *Fear, and the pit, and the snare*; fear of the pit, and the snare, are upon them, wherever they are; for the sons of men know not what evil they may suddenly be snared in, Eccl. ix. 12. These three words seem to be chosen for the sake of an elegant parenchyma, or, as we now scornfully call it, a jingle of words; *Pachad, and Pachathi, and Pach*; but the meaning is plain, (v. 18.) *that evil pursues sinners*, (Prov. xiii. 21.) that the curse shall overtaken the disobedient, (Deut. xxviii. 15.) that those who are secure, because they have escaped one judgment, know not how soon another may arrest them. What this prophet threatens all the inhabitants of the earth with, another makes part of the judgment of Moab, Jer. xlviii. 43, 44. But it is a common instance of the calamitous state of human life, that, when we seek to avoid one mischief, we fall into a worse, and that the end of one trouble is often the beginning of another; so that we are least safe when we are most secure.

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

But what is it that shakes the earth thus, and sinks it? It is the transgression thereof that shall be heavy upon it. Note, Sin is a burthen to the whole creation; it is a heavy burthen, a burthen under which it groans now, and will sink at last. Sin is the ruin of states, and kingdoms, and families; they fall under the weight of that *talent of lead*, Zech. v. 7, 8.

(3.) God will have a particular controversy with the kings and great men of the earth; (v. 21.) *He will punish the host of the high ones*; hosts of princes are no more before God than hosts of common men; what can a host of high ones do with their combined force, when the Most High, the Lord of hosts, contends with them to abase their height, and scatter their hosts, and break all their confederacies? The high ones, that are on high, that are puffed up with their height and grandeur, that think themselves so high that they are out of the reach of any danger, God will visit upon them all their pride and cruelty, with which they have oppressed and injured their neighbours and subjects, and it shall now return upon their own heads. The



kings of the earth shall now be reckoned with upon the earth, to show that verily there is a God that judges in the earth, and will render to the proudest of kings according to the fruit of their doings. Let those that are trampled upon by the high ones of the earth, comfort themselves with this, that, though they cannot, dare not, must not, resist them, yet there is a God that will call them to an account, that will triumph over them upon their own dung-hill; and the earth they are kings of, is, in the eye of God, no better. This is general only; it is particularly foretold, (v. 22.) that they shall be *gathered together as prisoners*; convicted, condemned prisoners are gathered in the pit, or dungeon, and there they shall be shut up under close confinement; the kings and high ones, who took all possible liberty themselves, and took a pride and pleasure in shutting up others, shall now be themselves shut up. Let not the free man glory in his freedom, any more than the strong man in his strength, for he knows not what restraints he is reserved for; but *after many days they shall be visited*. Either, [1.] They shall be visited in wrath; it is the same word, in another form, that is used, v. 21. The Lord shall punish them; they shall be reserved to the day of execution, as condemned prisoners are, and as fallen angels are *reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day*, Jude 6. Let this account for the delays of divine vengeance; sentence is not executed speedily, because execution-day is not yet come, and perhaps will not come till after many days; but it is certain, that the wicked is reserved for the day of destruction, and is therefore preserved in the mean time, but *shall be brought forth to the day of wrath*, Job xxi. 30. Let us therefore judge nothing before the time. [2.] They shall be visited in mercy, and be discharged from their imprisonment, and shall again obtain, if not their dignity, yet their liberty. Nebuchadnezzar in his conquests made many kings and princes his captives, and kept them in the dungeon in Babylon, and, among the rest, Jehoiachim king of Judah; but, after many days, when his head was laid, his son visited them, and granted (as should seem) some reviving to them all in their bondage; for it is made an instance of his particular kindness to Jehoiachim, that he *set his throne above the throne of the rest of the kings that were with him*, Jer. lii. 32. If we apply it to the general state of mankind, it denotes a revolution of conditions; those that were high are punished, those that were punished are relieved, after many days; that none in this world may be secure, though their condition be ever so prosperous, nor any despair, though their condition be ever so deplorable.

3. Glory to God in all this, v. 23. When all this comes to pass, when the proud enemies of God's church are humbled and brought down, (1.) Then it shall appear, beyond contradiction, that the Lord reigns; which is always true, but not always alike evident. When the kings of the earth are punished for their tyranny and oppression, then it is proclaimed and proved to all the world, that God is King of kings, King above them, by whom they are conquerable, King over them, to whom they are accountable; that he reigns as Lord of hosts, of all hosts, of their hosts; that he reigns in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem; in his church, for the honour and welfare of that, pursuant to the promises on which that is founded, reigns in his word and ordinances; that he reigns before his ancients, before all his saints, especially before his ministers, the elders of his church, who have their eye upon all the outgoings of his power and providence, and, in all these events, observe his hand. God's ancients, the old disciples, the experienced Christians, that have often, when they have been perplexed, gone into the

sanctuary of God in Zion and Jerusalem, and acquainted themselves with his manifestations of himself there, they shall see more than others of God's dominion and sovereignty in these operations of his providence. (2.) Then it shall appear, beyond comparison, that he reigns gloriously, in such brightness and lustre, that *the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed*, as the lesser lights are eclipsed and extinguished by the greater. Great men, who thought themselves to have as bright a lustre and as vast a dominion, as the sun and moon, shall be ashamed when God appears above them, much more when he appears against them: then shall *their faces be filled with shame*, that they may seek God's name. The eastern nations worshipped the sun and moon; but when God shall appear so gloriously for his people against his and their enemies, all these pretended deities shall be ashamed that ever they received the homage of their deluded worshippers. The glory of the Creator infinitely outshines the glory of the brightest creatures. In the great day, when the Judge of heaven and earth shall shine forth in his glory, *the sun shall by his transcendent lustre be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood*.

## CHAP. XXV.

After the threatenings of wrath in the foregoing chapter, we have here, I. Thankful praises for what God had done, which the prophet, in the name of the church, offers up to God, and teaches us to offer the like, v. 1. . 5. II. Precious promises of what God would yet further do for his church, especially in the grace of the gospel, v. 6. . 8. III. The church's triumph in God over her enemies thereupon, v. 9. . 12. This chapter looks as pleasantly upon the church as the former looked dreadfully upon the world.

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

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

I. The prophet determines to praise God himself: for they that would stir up others, should in the first place stir up themselves, to praise God; (v. 1.) "*O Lord, thou art my God, a God in cove-*

ment with me." When God is punishing the kings of the earth upon the earth, and making them tremble before him, a poor prophet can go to him, and with an humble boldness, say, *O Lord, thou art my God; and therefore I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name.* Those that have the Lord for their God, are obliged to praise him; for *therefore* he took us to be his people, *that we might be unto him for a name, and for a praise,* Jer. xiii. 11. In praising God, we exalt him; not that we can make him higher than he is, but we must make him to appear to ourselves and others higher than he does. See Exod. xv. 2.

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

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

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

2. He has in particular humbled the pride, and broken the power, of the mighty ones of the earth; (v. 2.) "*Thou hast made of a city, of many a city, a heap of rubbish; of many a defended city, that thought itself well guarded by nature and art, and the multitude and courage of its militia, thou hast made a ruin.*" What created strength can hold out against Omnipotence? "Many a city, so richly built, that it might be called a *palace*, and so much frequented and visited by persons of the best rank from all parts, that it might be called a *palace of strangers*, thou hast made to be no city; it is levelled with the ground, and not one stone left upon another, and it shall never be built again." This has been the case of many cities in divers parts of the world,

and in our own nation particularly; cities that flourished once, are gone to decay, and lost, and it is scarcely known (except by urns or coins dugged up out of the earth) where they stood. How many of the cities of Israel have long since been heaps and ruins! God hereby teaches us, that *here we have no continuing city*, and must therefore seek one to come, which will never be a ruin, or go to decay.

3. He has seasonably relieved and succoured his necessitous and distressed people; (v. 4.) *Thou hast been a Strength to the poor, a Strength to the needy.* As God weakens the strong that are proud and secure, so he strengthens the weak that are humble and serious, and stay themselves upon him. Nay, he not only makes them strong, but he is himself their Strength; for in him they strengthen themselves, and it is his favour and grace that are the *strength of their hearts.* He is a *Strength to the needy in his distress*, then when he needs strength, and when his distress drives him to God. And as he strengthens them against their inward decays, so he shelters them from outward assaults: he is a Refuge from the storm of rain or hail, and a Shadow from the scorching heat of the sun in summer. God is a sufficient Protection to his people in all weathers, both hot and cold, wet and dry; the armour of righteousness serves both on the right hand and on the left, 2 Cor. vi. 7. Whatever dangers or troubles God's people may be in, effectual care is taken that they shall sustain no real hurt or damage. When perils are most threatening and alarming, God will then appear for the safety of his people; *when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall*, which makes a great noise, but cannot overthrow the wall. The enemies of God's poor are terrible ones; they do all they can to make themselves so to them; their rage is like a blast of wind, loud, and blustering, and furious; but, like the wind, it is under a divine check; for *God holds the winds in his fists*; and God will be such a Shelter to his people, that they shall be able to stand the shock, keep their ground, and maintain their integrity and peace. A storm, beating on a ship, tosses it, but that which beats on a wall never stirs it, Ps. lxxvi. 10.—cxxxviii. 7.

4. That he does, and will, shelter those that trust in him, from the insolence of their proud oppressors; (v. 5.) *Thou shalt, or thou dost, bring down the noise of strangers*, thou shalt abate and still it, as *the heat in a dry place* is abated and moderated by the shadow of a cloud interposing; the branch, or rather the song or triumph, of the terrible ones shall be brought low, and they shall be made to change their note, and fall their voice. Observe, here, (1.) The oppressors of God's people are called *strangers*; for they forget that those they oppress are made of the same mould, of the same blood, with them. They are called *terrible ones*; for so they affect to be, rather than amiable ones; they would rather be feared than loved. (2.) Their insolence toward the people of God is noisy and hot, and that is all; it is but the noise of strangers, who think to carry their point by hectoring and bullying all that stand in their way, and talking big. *Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise*, Jer. xlii. 17. It is like the heat of the sun scorching in the middle of the day; but where is it, when the sun is set? (3.) Their noise and heat, and all their triumph, will be humbled and brought low, when their hopes are baffled, and all their honours laid in the dust. The branches, even the top branches, of the terrible ones, will be broken off, and thrown to the dunghill. (4.) If the labourers in God's vineyard be at any time called to *bear the burthen and heat of the day*, he will find some way or other to refresh them, as with the shadow of a cloud, that they may not be pressed above measure.

6. And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. 7. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. 8. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

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

1. That the grace of the gospel should be a royal feast for all people; not like that of Ahasuerus, which was intended only to show the grandeur of the master of the feast; (Esther i. 4.) for this is intended to gratify the guests, and therefore, whereas all *there* was for show, all *here* is for substance. The preparations made in the gospel for the kind reception of penitents and supplicants with God, are often in the New Testament set forth by the similitude of a feast; as Matth. xxii. 1, &c. which seems to be borrowed from this here. (1.) God himself is the Master of the feast, and, we may be sure, he prepares like himself, as becomes him to give, rather than as becomes us to receive. The Lord of hosts makes this feast. (2.) The guests invited are, all people, Gentiles as well as Jews. *Go preach the gospel to every creature*. There is enough for all, and whoever will, may come, and take freely, even those that are gathered out of the highways and the hedges. (3.) The place is mount Zion; thence the preaching of the gospel takes rise, the preachers must begin at Jerusalem. The gospel-church is the Jerusalem that is above, there this feast is made, and to it all the invited guests must go. (4.) The provision is very rich, and every thing is of the best; it is a feast which supposes abundance and variety; it is a continual feast to believers, it is their own *feast* if it be not. It is a *feast of fat things and full of marrow*; so relishing, so nourishing, are the comforts of the gospel to all those that feast upon them, and digest them. The returning prodigal was entertained with the fatted calf; and David has that pleasure in communion with God, with which his soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness. It is a feast of *wines on the lees*; the strongest-bodied wines, that have been kept long upon the lees, and then are well refined from them, so that they are clear and fine. There is that in the gospel, which, like wine soberly used, makes glad the heart, and raises the spirits, and is fit for those that are of a heavy heart, being under convictions of sin, and mourning for it, that they may drink, and forget their misery,

(for that is the proper use of wine, it is a cordial for those that need it, Prov. xxxi. 6, 7.) may be of good cheer, knowing that their sins are forgiven, and may be vigorous in their spiritual work and warfare, as a strong man refreshed with wine.

2. That the world should be freed from that darkness of ignorance and mistake, in the mists of which it has been so long lost and buried; (v. 7.) *He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering*, (the covering of the face,) with which all people are covered, (hoodwinked or blindfolded,) so that they cannot see their way, nor go about their work, and by reason of which they wander endlessly. Their faces are covered as men condemned, or as dead men. There is a *vail spread over all nations*, for they all sit in darkness; and no marvel, when the Jews themselves, among whom *God was known*, had a *vail upon their hearts*, 2 Cor. iii. 15. But this vail the Lord will destroy, by the light of his gospel shining in the world, and the power of his spirit opening men's eyes to receive it. He will raise those to spiritual life, that had long been dead in trespasses and sins.

3. That death should be conquered, the power of it broken, and the property of it altered; *He will swallow up death in victory*, v. 8. (1.) Christ will himself, in his resurrection, triumph over death; will break its bands, its bars, asunder, and cast away all its cords. The grave seemed to swallow him up, but really he swallowed it up. (2.) The happiness of the saints shall be out of the reach of death, which puts a period to all the enjoyments of this world, unbitters them, and stains the beauty of them. (3.) Believers may triumph over death, and look upon it as a conquered enemy; *O death, where is thy sting?* (4.) When the dead bodies of the saints shall be raised at the great day, and their mortality swallowed up of life, then death will be forever swallowed up of victory; and it is the last enemy.

4. That grief shall be banished, and there shall be perfect and endless joy; *The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces*. Those that mourn for sin, shall be comforted, and have their consciences pacified. In the covenant of grace there shall be that provided, which is sufficient to balance all the sorrows of this present time, to wipe away our tears, and to refresh us. Those particularly that suffer for Christ, shall have consolations abounding as their afflictions do abound. But in the joys of heaven, and no where short of them, will fully be brought to pass this saying, as that before, for there it is that God shall *wipe away all tears*, Rev. vii. 17.—xxi. 4. And therefore *there shall be no more sorrow*, because *there shall be no more death*. The hope of this should now wipe away all excessive tears, all the weeping that hinders sowing.

5. That all the reproach cast upon religion and the serious professors of it, shall be for ever rolled away; *The rebuke of his people*, which they have long lain under, the calumnies and misrepresentations by which they have been blackened, the insolence and cruelty with which their persecutors have trampled on them and trodden them down, *shall be taken away*. Their righteousness shall be brought forth as the light, in the view of all the world, who shall be convinced they are not such as they have been invidiously characterized: and so their salvation from the injuries done them as such, shall be wrought out. Sometimes in this world God does that for his people, which *takes away their reproach from among men*. However, it will be done effectually at the great day, for the Lord has spoken it, who can, and will, make it good. Let us patiently bear sorrow and shame now, and improve both; for shortly both will be done away.

9. And it shall be said in that day, Lo,

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

Here is,

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

II. A prospect of further blessings for the securing and perpetuating of these.

1. The power of God shall be engaged for them, and shall continue to take their part; *in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest,* v. 10. The church and people of God shall have continued proofs of God's presence with them, and residence among them, his hand shall be continually over them, to protect and guard them, and continually stretched out to them, for their supply. Mount Zion is *his rest for ever*; here he will dwell.

2. The power of their enemies, that is engaged against them, shall be broken. *Moab* is here put for all the adversaries of God's people, that are vexations to them; they shall all be trodden down, or threshed, *(for then they beat out the corn by tread-*

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

## CHAP. XXVI.

This chapter is a song of holy joy and praise, in which the great things God had engaged, in the foregoing chapter, to do for his people against his enemies and their enemies, are celebrated: it is prepared to be sung when that prophecy should be accomplished; for we must be forward to meet God with our thanksgiving, when he is coming towards us with his mercies. Now the people of God are here taught, I. To triumph in the safety and holy security both of the church in general, and of every particular member of it, under the divine protection, v. 1. . 4. II. To triumph over all opposing powers, v. 5, 6. III. To walk with God, and wait for him, in the worst and darkest times, v. 7. . 9. IV. To lament the stupidity of those who regarded not the providence of God, either merciful or afflictive, v. 10, 11. V. To encourage themselves, and one another, with hopes that God would still continue to do them good, (v. 12, 14.) engaging themselves to continue in his service, v. 13. VI. To recollect the providences of God that had respected them in their low and distressed condition, and their conduct under those providences, v. 15. . 18. VII. To rejoice in hope of a glorious deliverance, which should be as a resurrection to them, (v. 19.) and to retire in the expectation of it, 20, 21. And this is written for the support and assistance of the faith and hope of God's people in all ages, even those upon whom the ends of the world are come.

I. **I**N that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city: salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. 2. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. 3. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. 4. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.

To the prophecies of gospel-grace very fitly is a song annexed, in which we may give God the glory, and take to ourselves the comfort, of that grace; *In that day*, the gospel-day, which the day of the victories and enlargements of the Old Testament church was typical of, (to some of which perhaps this has a primary reference,) in that day, *this song shall be sung*; there shall be persons to sing it, and cause and hearts to sing it; it shall be sung in the land of Judah, which was a figure of the gospel-church; for the gospel-covenant is said to be made *with the house of Judah*, Heb. viii. 8.

Glorious things are here said of the church of God:

1. That it is strongly fortified against those that are bad; (v. 1.) *We have a strong city*; it is a city incorporated by the charter of the everlasting covenant, fitted for the reception of all that are made free by that charter, for their employment and entertainment; it is a strong city, as Jerusalem was, while it was a city compact together, and had God himself a Wall of fire round about it; so strong, that none would have believed that an enemy could ever *have entered into the gates of Jerusalem*, Lam. iv. 12. The church is a strong city, for it has walls and bulwarks, or counterscarps, and those of God's own appointing; for he has, in his promise, appointed salvation itself to be its defence. Those that are designed for salvation will find that to be their protection, 1 Pet. i. 4.

2. That it is richly replenished with those that are good, and they are instead of fortifications to it; for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, if they are such as they should be, are its strength, Zech. xii. 5. The gates are here ordered to be opened, *that the righteous nation, which keeps the truth, may enter in*; (v. 2.) they had been banished and driven out by the iniquity of the former times, but now the laws that were made against them are repealed, and they have liberty to enter in again. Or, There is an act for a general naturalization of all the righteous, whatever nation they are of, encouraging them to come and settle in Jerusalem. When God has done great things for any place or people, he expects that thus they should render according to the benefit done unto them; they should be kind to his people, and take them under their protection, and into their bosom. Note, (1.) It is the character of righteous men, that they keep the truths of God; a firm belief of which will have a commanding influence upon the regularity of the whole conversation. Good principles, fixed in the head, will produce good resolutions in the heart, and good practices in the life. (2.) It is the interest of states to countenance such, and court them among them, for they bring a blessing with them.

3. That all who belong to it are safe and easy, and have a holy security and serenity of mind in the assurance of God's favour. (1.) This is here the matter of a promise; (v. 3.) *Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace, in perfect peace*, inward peace, outward peace, peace with God, peace of conscience, peace at all times, under all events; this peace shall he be put into, and kept in the possession of, whose mind is stayed upon God, because it trusts in him. It is the character of every good man, that he trusts in God; puts himself under his guidance and government, and depends upon him that it shall be greatly to his advantage to do so. They that trust in God, must have their minds stayed upon him; must trust him at all times, under all events, must firmly and faithfully adhere to him, with an entire satisfaction in him. Such as do so, God will keep in perpetual peace, and that peace shall keep them. When evil tidings are abroad, they shall calmly expect the event, and not be disturbed by frightful apprehensions arising from them, whose hearts are *fixed, trusting in the Lord*, Ps. cxii. 7. (2.) It is the mat-

ter of a precept; (v. 4.) "Let us make ourselves easy by *trusting in the Lord for ever*; since God has promised peace to those that stay themselves upon him, let us not lose the benefit of that promise, but repose an entire confidence in him. Trust in him for ever, at all times, when you have nothing else to trust to; trust in him for that peace, that portion, which will be for ever." Whatever we trust to the world for, it will be but for a moment; all we expect from it, is confined within the limits of time; but what we trust in God for, will last as long as we shall last. For in the *Lord Jehovah, Jah, Jehovah*, in him who was, and is, and is to come, there is a rock of ages, a firm and lasting foundation for faith and hope to build upon; and the house built on that rock will stand in a storm. They that trust in God shall not only find in him, but receive *from him, everlasting strength*, strength that will carry them to everlasting life, to that blessedness which is for ever; and therefore let them trust in him for ever, and never cast away or change their confidence.

5. For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city he layeth it low: he layeth it low, *even to the ground*; he bringeth it *even to the dust*. 6. The foot shall tread it down, *even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy*. 7. The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just. 8. Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of *our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee*. 9. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments *are in the earth*, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. 10. Let favour be showed to the wicked, *yet will he not learn righteousness*: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD. 11. LORD, *when thy hand is lifted up*, they will not see: *but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people*; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.

Here the prophet further encourages us to trust in the Lord for ever, and continue waiting on him, for,

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

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

*the just is evenness*; so it may be read: it is their endeavour and constant care to walk with God in an even, steady course of obedience and holy conversation; *My foot stands in an even place*, goes in an even path, Ps. xxvi. 12. And it is their happiness, that God makes their way plain and easy before them; *Thou, most upright, dost level*, or *make even the path of the just*, by preventing or removing those things that would be stumbling-blocks to them, so that nothing shall offend them, Ps. exix. 165. God weighs it; (so we read it); he considers it, and will give them grace sufficient for them, to help them over all the difficulties they may meet with in their way. Thus with the upright, God will show himself upright.

III. It is our duty, and will be our comfort, to wait for God, and to keep up holy desires toward him, in the darkest and most discouraging times, v. 8, 9. This has always been the practice of God's people, even then when God has frowned upon them; 1. To keep up a constant dependence upon him; "In the way of thy judgments we have still waited for thee; when thou hast corrected us, we have looked to no other hand than thine to relieve us;" as the servant looks only to the hand of his master, till that he have mercy upon him, Ps. exxxiii. 2. We cannot appeal from God's justice, but to his mercy. If God's judgments continue long, if it be a *road of judgments*, (so the word signifies,) yet we must not be weary, but continue waiting. 2. To send up holy desires toward him; our troubles, how pressing soever, must never put us out of conceit with our religion, nor turn us away from God; but still *the desire of our soul must be to his name, and to the remembrance of him*; and in the night, the darkest, longest night of affliction, *with our souls must we desire him*. (1.) Our great concern must be for God's name, and our earnest desire that that may be glorified, whatever becomes of us and our names. This is that which we must wait for, and pray for; "*Father, glorify thy name*, and we are satisfied." (2.) Our great comfort must be in the remembrance of that name, of all that whereby God has made himself known. The remembrance of God must be our great support and pleasure; and though sometimes we be unmindful of him, yet still our desire must be toward the remembrance of him, and we must take pains with our own hearts to have him always in mind. (3.) Our desires toward God must be inward, fervent, and sincere. With our soul we must desire him, with our soul we must pant after him, (Ps. xlii. 1.) and with our spirits within us, with the innermost thought, and the closest application of mind, we must seek him. We make nothing of our religion, whatever our profession be, if we do not make heart-work of it. (4.) Even in the darkest night of affliction, our desires must be toward God, as our Sun and Shield; for however God is pleased to deal with us, we must never think the worse of him, nor cool in our love to him. (5.) If our desires be indeed toward God, we must evidence it by seeking him, and seeking him early, as those that desire to find him, and dread the thoughts of missing him. They that would seek God, and find him, must seek betimes, and seek him earnestly. Though we come ever so early, we shall find him ready to receive us.

IV. It is God's gracious design, in sending abroad his judgments, thereby to bring men to seek him and serve him; *When thy judgments are upon the earth*, laying all waste, then we have reason to expect that not only God's professing people, but *even the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness*; will have their mistakes rectified and their lives reformed, will be brought to acknowledge God's righteousness in punishing them; will

repent of their own unrighteousness in offending God, and so be brought to walk in right paths. They will do this; judgments are designed to bring them to this, they have a natural tendency to produce this effect; and though many continue obstinate, yet some, even of the inhabitants of the world, will profit by this discipline, and will learn righteousness; surely they will, they are strangely stupid if they do not. Note, The intention of affliction is, to teach us righteousness; and blessed is the man whom God chastens, and thus teaches; Ps. xciv. 12. *Discite justitiam, moniti, et non temere divos—Let this rebuke teach you to cultivate righteousness, and cease from despising the gods.* Virg.

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

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

(1.) Favour is showed to them; they receive many mercies from God, he causes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall, upon them, nay he prospers them, and into their hands he brings plentifully; they escape many of the strokes of God's judgments, which others, less wicked than they, have been cut off by; in some particular instances, they seem to be remarkably favoured above their neighbours, and the design of all this is, that they may be won upon to love and serve that God who thus favours them; and yet it is all in vain, they will not learn righteousness, will not be led to repentance by the goodness of God; and therefore it is requisite that God should send his judgments into the earth, to reckon with men for abused mercies.

(2.) They live in a *land of uprightness*, where religion is professed, and is in reputation, where the word of God is preached, and where they have many good examples set them: in a land of *evenness*, where there are not so many stumbling-blocks as in other places; in a land of *correction*, where vice and profaneness are discountenanced and punished; yet there they will deal unjustly, and go on frowardly in their evil ways. They that do wickedly, deal unjustly both with God and man, and with their own souls; and those that will not be reclaimed by the justice of the nation, may expect the judgments of God upon them. Nor can they expect a place hereafter in the land of blessedness, who now conform not to the laws and usages, nor improve the privileges and advantages of the land of uprightness. And why do they not? It is because they *will not behold the majesty of the Lord*; will not believe, will not consider, what a God of terrible majesty he is, whose laws and justice they persist in the contempt of. God's majesty appears in all the dispensations of his providence; but they regard it not, and therefore study not to answer the ends of those dispensations. Even when we receive of the mercy of the Lord, we must still behold the *majesty of the Lord, and his goodness*.

(3.) God lifts up his hand, to give them warning, that they may, by repentance and prayer, make their peace with him; but they take no notice of it, are not aware that God is angry with them, or coming forth against them; *they will not see*, and none so blind as those who will not see, who shut their eyes against the clearest conviction of guilt and wrath; who ascribe that to chance, or common fate, which is manifestly a divine rebuke; who regard not the threatening symptoms of their own ruin, but cry peace to themselves, when the righteous God is waging war with them.

2. How God will at length be too hard for them;



for when he judges, he will overcome; *They will not see, but they shall see*; they shall be made to see, whether they will or no, that God is angry with them. Atheists, scorners, and the secure, will shortly feel, what now they will not believe, *That it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. They will not see the evil of sin, and particularly the sin of hating and persecuting the people of God; but they shall see, by the tokens of God's displeasure against them for it, and the deliverances in which God will plead his people's cause, that what is done against them he takes as done against himself, and will reckon for it accordingly. They shall see that they have done God's people a great deal of wrong, and therefore shall be ashamed of their enmity and envy toward them, and their ill usage of such as deserved better treatment. Note, Those that bear ill will to God's people, have reason to be ashamed of it, so absurd and unreasonable is it; and, sooner or later, they shall be ashamed of it, and the remembrance of it shall fill them with confusion. Some read it, *They shall see, and be confounded for the zeal of the people*, by the zeal God will show for his people; when they shall be made to know how jealous God is for the honour and welfare of his people, they shall be confounded to think that they might have been of that people, and would not. Their doom therefore is, that, since they slighted the happiness of God's friends, *the fire of his enemies shall devour them*, that fire which is prepared for his enemies, and with which they shall be devoured, the fire designed for the devil and his angels. Note, Those that are enemies to God's people, and envy them, God looks upon as his enemies, and will deal with them accordingly.

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

The prophet, in these verses, looks back upon what God had done with them, both in mercy and judgment, and sings unto God of both; and then

looks forward upon what he hoped God would do for them. Observe,

1. His reviews and reflections are mixed. When he looks back upon the state of the church, he finds,

1. That God had in many instances been very gracious to them, and had done great things for them; (v. 12.) *Thou hast wrought all our works in us, or for us*. Whatever good work is done by us, it is owing to a good work wrought by the grace of God in us; it is he that puts good thoughts and affections into our hearts, if at any time they be there, and that *works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure*. *Acti agimus—Being acted upon, we act*. And if any kindness be showed us, or any of our affairs be prosperous and successful, it is God that works it for us; and every creature, every business, that are any way serviceable to our comfort, it is he that makes them to be so; sometimes he makes *that* to work for us, which seemed to make against us.

In particular; (v. 15.) *Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord*, so that a little one has become a thousand; in Egypt they multiplied exceedingly, and afterward in Canaan; so that they filled the land; and in this *thou art glorified*; for the multitude of the people is the honour of the prince: and therein God was glorified as faithful to his covenant with Abraham, that he would make him a father of many nations. Note, God's nation is a growing nation, and it is the glory of God that it is so. The increase of the church, that holy nation, is *therefore* to be rejoiced in, because it is the increase of those that make it their business to glorify God in this world.

2. That yet he had laid them under his rebukes.

(1.) The neighbouring nations had sometimes oppressed them, and tyrannized over them; (v. 13.) *"O Lord our God, thou who hast the sole right to rule us, whose subjects and servants we are, to thee we complain, (for whither else should we go with our complaints?) that other lords, beside thee, have had dominion over us."* Not only in the day of the Judges, but afterwards, God frequently sold them into the hand of their enemies; or rather, *by their iniquities they sold themselves*, ch. lii. 3—5. When they had been careless in the service of God, God suffered their enemies to have dominion over them, that they might know the difference between his service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries. It may be understood as a confession of sin, their serving other gods, and subjecting themselves to the superstitious laws and customs of their neighbours, by which other lords (for they called their idols *Baals, lords*;) had dominion over them, beside God. But now they promise that it shall be so no more: *"From henceforth by thee only will we make mention of thy name; we will worship thee only, and in that way only which thou hast instituted and appointed."* The same may be our penitent reflection, *Other lords, beside God, have had dominion over us*; every lust has been our lord, and we have been led captive by it; and it has been long enough, and too long, that we have thus wronged both God and ourselves. The same therefore must be our pious resolution, that from henceforth we will make mention of God's name only, and by him only; that we will keep close to God and to our duty, and never desert it.

(2.) They had sometimes been carried into captivity before their enemies; (v. 15.) *"The nation which at first thou didst increase, and make to take root, thou hast now diminished, and plucked up, and removed to all the ends of the earth, driven out to the utmost parts of heaven;"* as is threatened, Deut. xxx. 4.—xxviii. 64. But observe, betwixt the mention of the increasing of them, and that of the removing of them, it is said, *Thou art glorified*; for

the judgments God inflicts upon his people for their sins, are for his honour, as well as the mercies he bestows upon them in performance of his promise.

(3.) He remembers that when they were thus oppressed, and carried captive, they cried unto God; which was a good evidence that they neither had quite forsaken him, nor were quite forsaken of him, and that there were merciful intentions in the judgments they were under: (*v. 16.*) *Lord, in trouble have they visited thee.* This was usual with the people of Israel, as we find frequently in the story of the Judges; when *other lords had dominion over them, they humbled themselves, and said, The Lord is righteous*, 2 Chron. xii. 6. See here, [1.] The need we have of afflictions; they are necessary to stir up prayer; when it is said, *In trouble they have visited thee*, it is implied that in their peace and prosperity they were strangers to God, kept at a distance from him, and seldom came near him; as if, when the world smiled upon them, they had no occasion for his favours. [2.] The benefit we often have by afflictions; they bring us to God, quicken us to our duty, and show us our dependence upon him. Those that before seldom looked at God, now visit him; they come frequently, they become friendly, and make their court to him. Before, prayer came drop by drop, but now they pour out a prayer; it comes now like water from a fountain, not like water from a still. They poured out a *secret speech*; so the margin: praying is speaking to God, but it is a secret speech; for it is the language of the heart, otherwise it is not praying. Afflictions bring us to secret prayer, in which we may be more free and particular in our addresses to him, than we can be in public. In affliction, those will seek God early, who before sought him slowly, Hos. v. 15. It will make men fervent and fluent in prayer; "They poured out a prayer, as the drink-offerings were poured out, when thy chastening was upon them." But it is to be feared, when the chastening is off them, they will by degrees return to their former carelessness, as they had often done.

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

[1.] They had the throes and pangs they dreaded; "We have been like a woman in labour, that cries out in her pangs. We have with a great deal of anxiety and toil endeavoured to help ourselves, and our troubles have been increased by those attempts," as when Moses came to deliver Israel, the tale of bricks was doubled. Their prayers were quickened by the acuteness of their pains, and became as strong and vehement as the cries of a woman in sore travail; *so have we been in thy sight, O Lord.* It was a comfort and satisfaction to them, in their distress, that God had his eye upon them, that all their miseries were in his sight; he was no stranger to their pangs or their prayers; *Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee*, Ps. xxxviii. 9. Whenever they came to present themselves before the Lord with their complaints and petitions, they were in agonies like those of a woman in travail.

[2.] They came short of the issue and success they desired and hoped for; "*We have been with child*; we have had great expectation of a speedy and happy deliverance, have been big with hopes, and, when we have been in pain, have comforted ourselves with this, that the joyful birth would make us forget our misery, John xvi. 21. But alas, *we have as it were brought forth wind*; it has proved a false conception, our expectations have been frustrated, and our pains have been rather dying pains than travelling ones; we have had a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. All our efforts have proved unsuccessful; *we have not wrought any deliverance*

*in the earth, for ourselves or for our friends and allies*; but rather have made our own ease and theirs worse; *neither have the inhabitants of the world, whom we have been contesting with, fallen before us, either in their power or in their hopes*; but they are still as high and arrogant as ever." Note, A righteous cause may be strenuously pleaded both by prayer and endeavour, both with God and man; and yet for a great while may suffer, and the point not be gained.

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

Two things in particular the prophet here comforts the church with the prospect of.

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

2. The surprising resurrection of her friends, *v. 19.* Though the church rejoices not in the birth of the man-child, of which she travailed in pain, *but has as it were brought forth wind*, (*v. 18.*) yet the disappointment shall be balanced in a way equivalent; *Thy dead men shall live*; those who were thought to be dead, who had received a sentence of death within themselves, who were cast out as if they had been naturally dead, they shall appear again in their former vigour. A spirit of life from God shall enter into the slain witnesses, and they shall prophesy again, Rev. xi. 11. *The dry bones shall live*, and become an exceeding great army, Ezek. xxxvii. 10. *Together with my dead body*

*shall they arise.* If we believe the resurrection of the dead, of our dead bodies at the last day, as Job did, and the prophet here, that will facilitate our belief of the promised restoration of the church's lustre and strength in this world. When God's time is come, how low soever she may be brought, they shall arise, even Jerusalem, the city of God, but now lying like a dead body, a carcass to which the eagles are gathered together. God owns it still for his, so does the prophet; but it shall arise, shall be rebuilt, and flourish again. And therefore, let the poor, desolate, melancholy remains of its inhabitants, that dwell as in dust, awake and sing, for they shall see Jerusalem, the city of their solemnities, a quiet habitation again, *ch. xxxiii. 20.* The dew of God's favour shall be to it as the evening dew to the herbs, that were parched with the heat of the sun all day, it shall revive and refresh them. And as the spring-dews, that water the earth, and make the herbs that lay buried in it, to put forth and bud, so shall they flourish again, and the earth shall cast out the dead, as it casts the herbs out of their roots. The earth, in which they seemed to be lost, shall contribute to their revival. When the church and her interests are to be restored, neither the dew of heaven, nor the fatness of the earth, shall be wanting to do their parts towards it. Now this (as Ezekiel's vision, which is a comment upon it) may be fitly accommodated, (1.) To the spiritual resurrection of those that were dead in sin, by the power of Christ's gospel and grace. So Dr. Lightfoot applies it, *Hor. Hebr. in Joh. xii. 24.* The Gentiles shall live, with my body shall they arise; they shall be called in after Christ's resurrection, shall rise with him, and sit with him in heavenly places; nay, they shall arise my body; (says he;) they shall become the mystical body of Christ, and shall rise as part of him. (2.) To the last resurrection; when dead saints shall live, and rise together with Christ's dead body; for he rose as the First-Fruits, and believers shall rise by virtue of their union with him, and their communion in his resurrection.

20. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. 21. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

These two verses are supposed not to belong to the song, which takes up the rest of the chapter, but to begin a new matter, and to be rather an introduction to the following chapter than the conclusion of this. Or, whereas, in the foregoing song, the people of God had spoken to him, complaining of their grievances, here he returns an answer to their complaints. In which,

1. He invites them into their chambers; (*v. 20.*) "*Come, my people, come to me, come with me;*" (he calls them no whither but where he himself will accompany them;) "let the storm that disperses others, bring you nearer together. Come, and enter into thy chambers; stay not abroad, lest you be caught in the storm, as the Egyptians in the hail," *Exod. ix. 21.* (1.) "Come into chambers of distinction; come into your own apartments, and continue not any longer mixed with the children of Babylon. Come out from among them, and be ye separate," *2 Cor. vi. 17.* *Rev. xviii. 4.* If God has set apart them that are godly for himself, they ought to set themselves apart. (2.) "Into chambers of defence; in which, by the secrecy, of them, or the

strength, you may be safe in the worst of times." The attributes of God are the secret of his tabernacle, *Ps. xxvii. 5.* His name is a strong tower, into which we may run for shelter, *Prov. xviii. 10.* We must, by faith, find a way into these chambers, and there hide ourselves with a holy security and serenity of mind, we must put ourselves under the divine protection. Come, as Noah into the ark, for he shut the doors about him; when dangers are threatening, it is good to retire, and lie hid, as Elijah did by the brook Cherith. (3.) Into chambers of devotion; "Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door," *Matth. vi. 6.* Be private with God; enter into thy chamber, to examine thyself and commune with thy own heart, to pray, and humble thyself before God." This work is to be done in times of distress and danger; and thus we hide ourselves; we recommend ourselves to God to hide us, and he will hide us either under heaven or in heaven. Israel must keep within doors, when the destroying angel is slaying the first-born of Egypt, else the blood on the door-posts will not secure them. So must Rahab and her family, when Jericho is destroyed. Those are most safe, that are least seen. *Qui bene latuit, bene vixit—He has lived well, who has sought a proper degree of concealment.*

2. He assures them that the trouble would be over in a very short time; that they should not long be in any fright or peril; "Hide thyself for a moment, the smallest part of time we can conceive, like an atom of matter; nay, if you can imagine one moment shorter than another, it is but for a little moment, and that with a quasi too, as it were, for a little moment, less than you think of; when it is over, it will seem as nothing to you, you will wonder how soon it is gone. You shall not need to lie long in confinement, long in concealment; the indignation will presently be overpast; the indignation of the enemies against you, their persecuting power and rage, which force you to abscond; when the wicked rise, a man is hid. This will soon be over, God will cut them off, will break their power, defeat their purposes, and find a way for your enlargement." When Athanasius was banished Alexandria by an edict of Julian, and his friends greatly lamented it, he bid them be of good cheer; *Nubecula est quæ cito pertransibit—It is a little cloud that will soon blow over. You shall have tribulation ten days;* that is all, *Rev. ii. 10.* This enables God's suffering people to call their afflictions light, that they are but for a moment.

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

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

### CHAP. XXVII.

In this chapter, the prophet goes on to show, I. What great things God would do for his church and people, which should now shortly be accomplished in the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, and the destruction of the Assyrian army; but it is expressed generally, for the encouragement of the church in after ages, with reference to the power and prevalence of her enemies. 1. That proud oppressors should be reckoned with, v. 1. 2. That care should be taken of the church, as of God's vineyard, v. 2, 3. 3. That God would let fall his controversy with the people, upon their return to him, v. 4, 5. 4. That he would greatly multiply and increase them, v. 6. 5. That as to their afflictions, the property of them should be altered; (v. 7.) they should be mitigated and moderated, (v. 8.) and sanctified, v. 9. 6. That though the church might be laid waste, and made desolate, for a time, (v. 10, 11.) yet it should be restored, and the scattered members should be gathered together again, v. 12, 13. 11. All this is applicable to the grace of the gospel, and God's promises to, and providences concerning, the Christian church, and such as belong to it.

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

The prophet is here singing of judgment and mercy.

I. Of judgment upon the enemies of God's church; (v. 1.) *tribulation to them that trouble it*, 2 Thess. i. 6. When the Lord comes out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth, (ch. xxvi. 21.) he will be sure to punish leviathan, the dragon that is in the sea; every proud, oppressing tyrant, that is the terror of the mighty, and, like the leviathan, is so fierce, that none dare stir him up, and his heart

as hard as a stone, and when he raises up himself, the mighty are afraid, Job xli. 10, 24, 25. The church has many enemies, but commonly some one that is more formidable than the rest. So Sennacherib was, in his day, and Nebuchadnezzar in his, and Antiochus in his; so Pharaoh had been formerly, and he is called *leviathan*, and the dragon, P. lxxiv. 14. ch. li. 9. Ezek. xxix. 3. The New Testament church has had its leviathans; we read of a great red dragon ready to devour it, Rev. xii. 5. Those malignant persecuting powers are here compared to the leviathan, for bulk and strength, and the mighty bustle they make in the world; to dragons, for their rage and fury; to serpents, piercing serpents, penetrating in their counsels, quick in their motions, which, if they once get in their head, will soon wind in their whole body; *crossing like a bar*, so the margin, standing in the way of all their neighbours, and obstructing them; to crooked serpents, subtle and insinuating, but perverse and mischievous. Great and mighty princes, if they oppose the people of God, are, in God's account, as dragons and serpents, and plagues of mankind; and the Lord will punish them in due time. They are too big for men to deal with, and call to an account, and therefore the great God will take the doing of it into his own hands. He has a *sore, and great, and strong sword*, wherewith to do execution upon them, when the *measure of their iniquity is full*, and their *day is come to fall*. It is emphatically expressed in the original; The Lord with his sword, that cruel one, and that great one, and that strong one, shall punish this unwieldy, this unruly criminal, and it shall be capital punishment; *he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea*; for the wages of his sin is death. This shall not only be a prevention of his doing further mischief, as the slaying of a wild beast, but a just punishment for the mischief he has done, as the putting of a traitor or rebel to death. God has a strong sword for the doing of this; variety of judgments, sufficient to humble the proud, and break the most powerful, of his enemies; and he will do it when the day of execution comes. In that day, he will punish; his day which is coming, Ps. xxxvii. 13. This is applicable to the spiritual victories obtained by our Lord Jesus over the powers of darkness. He not only disarmed, spoiled, and cast out, the prince of this world, but, with his strong sword, the virtue of his death, and the preaching of his gospel, he does, and will, *destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*, that great leviathan, that old serpent, the dragon. He shall be bound, that he may not deceive the nations, and that is a punishment to him, Rev. xx. 2, 3. And, at length, for deceiving the nations, he shall be *cast into the lake of fire*, Rev. xx. 10.

II. Of mercy to the church; in that same day, when God is punishing the leviathan, let the church and all her friends be easy and cheerful; let those that attend her, sing to her for her comfort, sing her asleep with these assurances; let it be sung in her assemblies.

1. That she is God's vineyard, and is under his particular care, v. 2, 3. She is, in God's eye, a *vineyard of red wine*. The world is as a fruitless, worthless wilderness; but the church is enclosed as a vineyard, a peculiar place, and of value, that has great care taken of it, and great pains taken with it, and from which precious fruits are gathered, wherewith they honour God and man. It is a vineyard of red wine, yielding the best and choicest grapes; intimating the reformation of the church, that it now brings forth good fruit unto God, whereas before it brought forth fruit to itself, or brought forth wild grapes, ch. v. 4.

Now God takes care, (1.) Of the safety of this vineyard; *I the Lord do keep it*. He speaks this,

as glorying in it, that he is, and has undertaken to be, the Keeper of Israel: those that bring forth fruit to God, are, and shall be always, under his protection. He speaks this, as assuring us that they shall be so; *I the Lord, that can do every thing, but cannot lie nor deceive, I do keep it, lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day.* God's vineyard in this world lies much exposed to injury; there are many that would hurt it, would tread it down, and lay it waste; (Ps. lxxx. 13.) but God will suffer no real hurt or damage to be done it, but what he will bring good out of it. He will keep it constantly, night and day; and not without need, for the enemies are restless in their designs and attempts against it, and, both night and day, seek an opportunity to do it a mischief. God will keep it in the night of affliction and persecution, and in the day of peace and prosperity, the temptations of which are no less dangerous. God's people shall be preserved, not only from the *pestilence that walketh in darkness*, but from the *destruction that wasteth at noon-day*, Ps. xci. 6. This vineyard shall be well fenced. (2.) Of the fruitfulness of this vineyard; *I will water it every moment*, and yet it shall not be overwatered. The still and silent dews of God's grace and blessing shall continually descend upon it, that it may bring forth much fruit. We need the constant and continual waterings of the divine grace; for if that be at any time withdrawn, we wither, and come to nothing. God waters his vineyard by the ministry of the word, that is, by his servants the prophets, whose doctrine shall drop as the dew. Paul plants, and Apollos waters, but God gives the increase; for without him the watchman wakes, and the husbandman waters, in vain.

2. That though sometimes he contends with his people, yet, upon their submission, he will be reconciled to them, v. 4, 5. Fury is not in him toward his vineyard; though he meets with many things in it that are offensive to him, yet he does not seek advantages against it, nor is extreme to mark what is amiss in it. It is true, if he find in it briers and thorns instead of vines, and they be set in battle against him, (as indeed that in the vineyard, which is not for him, is against him,) he will tread them down, and burn them; but otherwise, "If I am angry with my people, they know what course to take; let them humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and so take hold of my strength with a sincere desire to make their peace with me, and I will soon be reconciled to them, and all shall be well." God sees the sins of his people, and is displeased with them; but, upon their repentance, he turns away his wrath.

This may very well be construed as a summary of the doctrine of the gospel, with which the church is to be watered every moment. (1.) Here is a quarrel supposed between God and man; for here is a battle fought, and peace to be made. It is an old quarrel, ever since sin first entered; it is, on God's part, a righteous quarrel, but, on man's part, most unrighteous. (2.) Here is a gracious invitation given us to make up this quarrel, and to get these matters in variance accommodated; "Let him that is desirous to be at peace with God, take hold on his strength, on his strong arm, which is lifted up against the sinner, to strike him dead; and let him by supplication keep back the stroke; let him wrestle with me, as Jacob did, resolving not to let me go without a blessing; and he shall be *Israel—a prince with God*." Pardoning mercy is called the power of our Lord; let him take hold on that. Christ is the *Arm of the Lord*, ch. liii. 1. Christ crucified is the *power of God*; (1 Cor. i. 24.) let him by a lively faith take hold on him, as a man that is sinking catches hold of a bough, or cord, or plank, that is in his reach; or as the malefactor took

hold on the horns of the altar, believing that there is no other name by which he can be saved, by which he can be reconciled. (3.) Here is a three-fold cord of arguments to persuade us to do this. [1.] Time and space are given us to do it in, for fury is not in God; he does not carry it towards us as great men carry it towards their inferiors, when the one is in fault, and the other in a fury. Men in a fury will not take time for consideration; it is, with them, but a word and a blow. Furious men are soon angry, and implacable when they are angry; a little thing provokes them, and no little thing will pacify them: but it is not so with God; he considers our frame, is slow to anger, does not stir up his wrath, nor always chide. [2.] It is in vain to think of contesting with him. If we persist in our quarrel with him, and think to make our part good, it is but like setting briers and thorns before a consuming fire, which will be so far from giving check to the progress of it, that they will but make it burn the more outrageously. We are not an equal match for Omnipotence. Wo unto him therefore that strives with his Maker! He knows not the power of his anger. [3.] This is the only way, and it is a sure way, to reconciliation; "Let him take this course to make peace with me, and he shall make peace; and thereby good, all good, shall come unto him." God is willing to be reconciled to us, if we be but willing to be reconciled to him.

3. That the church of God in the world shall be a growing body, and come at length to be a great body; (v. 6.) *In times to come*, (so some read it,) *in after-times*, when these calamities are overpast; or, in the days of the gospel, the latter days, he shall cause Jacob to take root, deeper root than ever yet; for the gospel-church shall be more firmly fixed than ever the Jewish church was, and shall spread further. Or, *He shall cause them of Jacob*, that come back out of their captivity, or, as we read it, *them that come of Jacob, to take root downward, and bear fruit upward*, ch. xxxvii. 31. They shall be established in a prosperous state, and then they shall blossom and bud, and give hopeful prospects of a great increase; and so it shall prove, for *they shall fill the face of the world with fruit*. Many shall be brought into the church, proselytes shall be numerous; some out of all the nations about, that shall be to the God of Israel for a name and a praise; and the converts shall be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness; the preaching of the gospel brought forth fruit in all the world, (Col. i. 6.) fruit that remains, John xv. 16.

7. 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?

8. In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind. 9. By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalk-stones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up. 10. Yet the defenced city shall be desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness: there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof. 11. When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off: the women come and set them on fire

for it is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour. 12. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. 13. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

Here is the prophet again singing of mercy and judgment, not, as before, judgment to the enemies, and mercy to the church; but judgment to the church, and mercy mixed with that judgment.

I. Here is judgment threatened even to Jacob and Israel; they shall blossom and bud, *v.* 6. But, 1. They shall be smitten and slain; (*v.* 7.) some of them shall. If God finds any thing amiss among them, he shall lay them under the tokens of his displeasure for it. Judgment shall begin at the house of God, and those whom God has known of all the families of the earth, he will punish in the first place. 2. Jerusalem, their defended city, shall be desolate, *v.* 10, 11. God having tried a variety of methods with them for their reformation, which, as to many, have proved ineffectual, he will for a time lay their country waste, which was accomplished when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans; then that habitation was for a long time forsaken. If lesser judgments do not do the work, God will send greater; for, when he judges, he will overcome. Jerusalem had been a defended city, not so much by art or nature, as by grace and the divine protection; but when God was provoked to withdraw, her Defence was departed from her, and then she was left like a wilderness. And in the pleasant gardens of Jerusalem cattle shall feed, shall lie down there, and there shall be none to disturb them or drive them away, there they shall be *bruant and couchant*,\* and they shall eat the tender branches of the fruit-trees; which perhaps further signifies that the people should become an easy prey to their enemies; when the boughs thereof are withered as they grow upon the tree, being blasted by winds and frosts, and not pruned, they shall be broken off for fuel, and the women and children shall come and set them on fire. There shall be a total destruction, for the very trees shall be destroyed. And this is a figure of the deplorable state of the vineyard, (*v.* 2.) when it *brought forth wild grapes*; (*ch.* v. 2.) and our Saviour seems to refer to this, when he says of the branches of the vine which *abide not in him*, that they are *cast forth and withered*, and *men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned*, (John xv. 6.) which was in a particular manner fulfilled in the unbelieving Jews.

The similitude is explained in the following words; *It is a people of no understanding*, brutish and sots, and destitute of the knowledge of God, and that have no relish or savour of divine things, like a withered branch that has no sap in it; and this is at the bottom of all those sins for which God left them desolate, their idolatry first, and afterward their infidelity. Wicked people, however in other things they may be wits and politicians, in their greatest concerns are of no understanding; and their

\* A law-phrase, applicable when cattle have been so long in another man's ground, that they have lain down, and are risen up to feed — Ed.

ignorance being wilful, that shall not only not be their excuse, but it shall be the ground of their condemnation; for therefore *he that made them*, that gave them their being, *will not have mercy on them*, nor save them from the ruin they bring upon themselves; and *he that formed them* into a people, formed them for himself, to show forth his praise, seeing they do not answer the end of their formation, but hate to be reformed, to be new-formed, will reject them, and show them no favour; and then they are undone: for if he that made use of his power, do not make us happy in his favour, we had better never have been made. Sinners flatter themselves with hopes of impunity; at least that they shall not be dealt with so severely as their ministers tell them, because God is merciful, and because he is their Maker: but here we see how weak and insufficient those pleas will be; for if they be of no understanding, he that made them, though he made them, and hates nothing that he has made, and though he has mercy in store for those who so far understand themselves as to apply themselves to him for it, yet on them he will have no mercy, and will show them no favour.

II. Here is a great deal of mercy mixed with this judgment; for there are good people mixed with those that are corrupt and degenerate, a remnant according to the election of grace, on whom God will have mercy, and to whom he will show favour: and these promises seem to point at all the calamities of the church, for which God would graciously provide these allays.

1. Though they should be smitten and slain, yet not to that degree, and in that manner, that their enemies shall be smitten and slain; (*v.* 7.) God has *smitten Jacob and Israel*, and he is slain; many of them that *understand among the people*, shall *fall by the sword and by flame many days*, Dan. xi. 33. But it shall not be as those are smitten and slain, (1.) Who smote him formerly, who were the rod of God's anger, and the staff in his hand, which he made use of for the correction of his people, and to whose turn it shall come to be reckoned with even for that: the child is spared, but the rod is burned. (2.) Who shall afterward be slain by him, when he shall get the dominion, and repay them in their own coin; or slain for his sake in the pleading of his cause. God's people and God's enemies are here represented, [1.] As struggling with each other; so the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent have been, are, and will be: in this contest there are slain on both sides. God makes use of wicked men, not only to smite, but to slay his people; for they are his sword, Ps. xvii. 13. But when the cup of trembling comes to be put into their hand, it will be much worse with them than ever it was with God's people in their greatest straits: the seed of the woman has only his heel bruised, but the serpent has his head crushed and broken. Note, Though God's persecuted people may be great losers, and great sufferers, for awhile, yet they that oppress them, will prove to be greater losers, and greater sufferers, at last, here or hereafter; for God will render double to them, Rev. xviii. 6. [2.] As sharing together in the calamities of this present time, they are both smitten, both slain, and both by the hand of God; for there is *one event to the righteous and to the wicked*; but is Jacob smitten as his enemies are? No, by no means; to him the property is altered, and it becomes quite another thing. Note, However it may seem to us, there is really a vast difference between the afflictions and deaths of good people, and the afflictions and deaths of wicked people.

2. Though God will debate with them, yet it shall be in measure, and the affliction shall be mitigated, moderated, and proportioned to their strength, not



to their deserts, v. 8. He will deal out afflictions to them, as the wise physician prescribes medicines to his patient, just such a quantity of each ingredient, or orders how much blood shall be taken when a vein is opened: thus God orders the troubles of his people, *not suffering them to be tempted above what they are able*, 1 Cor. x. 13. He measures out their afflictions by a little at a time, that they may not be pressed above measure; for he knows their frame, and corrects in judgment, and does not stir up all his wrath. When the affliction is shooting forth, when he is sending it out, and giving it its commission, then he debates in measure, and not in extremity; he considers what we can bear, then when he begins to correct; and when he proceeds in his controversy, so that it is the *day of his east-wind*, which is not only blustering and noisy, but blasting and noxious, yet he stays his rough wind, checks it, and sets bounds to it, does not suffer it to blow so hard as it was feared; when he is winnowing his corn, it is with a gentle gale, that shall only blow away the chaff, but not the good corn. God has the winds at his command, and every affliction under his check; *Hitherto it shall go, but no further*. Let us not despair when things are at the worst; be the winds ever so rough, ever so high, God can say unto them, *Peace, be still*.

3. Though God will afflict them, yet he will make their afflictions to work for the good of their souls, and correct them as the father does the child, to drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts; (v. 9.) *By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged*. This is the design of the affliction, to this it is adapted as a proper means, and, by the grace of God working with it, it shall have this blessed effect; it shall mortify the habits of sin; by this those defilements of the soul shall be purged away; it shall break them off from the practice of it; this is all the fruit, this is it that God intends, this is all the harm it will do them, to take away their sin; than which they could not have a greater kindness done them, though it be at the expense of an affliction. *Therefore*, because the affliction is mitigated and moderated, and the rough wind stayed, *therefore* we may conclude that he designs their reformation, not their destruction: and because he deals thus gently with us, we should *therefore* study to answer his ends in afflicting us. The particular sin which the affliction was intended to cure them of, was, the sin of idolatry, the sin which did most easily beset that people, and to which they were strangely addicted. *Ephraim is joined to idols*. But by the captivity in Babylon they were not only weaned from this sin, but set against it. *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?* Jacob then has his sin taken away, his beloved sin, *when he makes all the stones of the altar*, of his idolatrous altar, the stones of which were precious and sacred to him, *as chalk-stones that are beaten in sunder*; he not only has them in contempt, and values them no more than chalk-stones, but he conceives an indignation at them, and, in a holy revenge, beats them asunder as easily as chalk-stones are broken to pieces: the groves and the images shall not stand before this penitent, but they shall be thrown down too, never to be set up again. This was according to the law for the demolishing and destroying of all the monuments of idolatry; (Deut. vii. 5.) and according to this promise, since the captivity in Babylon, no people in the world have such a rooted aversion to idols and idolatry as the people of the Jews. Note, The design of affliction is to part between us and sin, especially that which has been *our own iniquity*; and then it appears that the affliction has done us good, when we keep at a distance from the occasions of sin, and use all needful precaution that

we may not only not relapse into it, but not so much as be tempted to it, Ps. cxix. 67.

4. Though Jerusalem shall be desolate and forsaken for a time, yet there will come a day when its scattered friends shall resort to it again out of all the countries whither they were dispersed; (v. 12, 13.) though the body of the nation is abandoned as a people of no understanding, yet those that are indeed children of Israel shall be gathered together again as the sheep of the flock, when the shepherds that scattered them are reckoned with, Ezek. xxxiv. 10—12. Now observe concerning these scattered Israelites, (1.) From whence they shall be fetched; *The Lord shall beat them off as fruit from the tree*, or beat them out as corn out of the ear; he shall find them out, and separate them from those whom they dwelt among, and with whom they seemed to be incorporated, from the channel of the river Euphrates north-east, unto Nile the stream of Egypt, which lay south-west; those that were driven into the land of Assyria, and were captives there in the land of their enemies, where they were ready to perish for want of necessities, and ready to despair of deliverance; and those that were *outcasts in the land of Egypt*, whither many of those that were left behind, after the captivity into Babylon, went, contrary to God's express command, (Jer. xliii. 6, 7.) and there lived as outcasts: God has mercy in store for them all, and will make it to appear, that though they are cast out, they are not cast off. (2.) In what manner they shall be brought back; "Ye shall be gathered one by one, not in multitudes, not in troops forcing your way; but silently, and as it were by stealth, dropping in, first one, and then another." This intimates that the remnant that shall be saved, consists but of few, and those saved with difficulty, and so as by fire, scarcely saved; they shall not come for company, but as God shall stir up every man's spirit. (3.) By what means they shall be gathered together; *The great trumpet shall be blown*, and then they shall come. Cyrus's proclamation of liberty to the captives is this great trumpet, which awakened the Jews that were asleep in their thralldom to bestir themselves; it was like the sounding of the jubilee-trumpet, which published the year of release. This is applicable to the preaching of the gospel, by which sinners are gathered in to the grace of God, such as were outcasts and ready to perish; those that were afar off are made nigh; the gospel proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord. It is applicable also to the archangel's trumpet at the last day, by which saints shall be gathered to the glory of God, that lay as outcasts in their graves. (4.) For what end they shall be gathered together; *to worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem*. When the captives rallied again, and returned to their own land, the chief thing they had their eye upon, and the first thing they applied themselves to, was, the worship of God: the holy temple was in ruins, but they had the holy mount, *the place of the altar*, Gen. xiii. 4. Liberty to worship God is the most valuable and desirable liberty; and, after restraints and dispersions, a free access to his house should be more welcome to us than a free access to our own houses. Those that are gathered by the sounding of the gospel-trumpet, are brought in to worship God, and added to the church, and the great trumpet of all will gather the saints together, to *serve God day and night in his temple*.

## CHAP. XXVIII.

In this chapter, I. The Ephraimites are reproved and threatened for their pride and drunkenness, their security and sensuality, v. 1.—8. But, in the midst of this, here is a gracious promise of God's favours to the remnant of his people, v. 5, 6. II. They are likewise reproved and threatened for their dulness and stupidity, unaptness to profit by the instructions which the pro-

phets gave them, in God's name, v. 9. 13. III. The rulers of Jerusalem are reproved and threatened for their insolent contempt of God's judgments, and setting them at defiance; and, after a gracious promise of Christ and his grace, they are made to know that the vain hopes of escaping the judgments of God, with which they flattered themselves, would certainly deceive them, v. 14. 22. IV. All this is confirmed by a comparison borrowed from the method which the husbandman takes with his ground and grain, according to which they must expect God would proceed with his people, whom he had lately called his *threshing* and *the corn of his floor*, ch. xxi. 10. v. 23. 29. This is written for our admonition, and is profitable for reproof and warning to us.

1. **W**O to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine! 2. Behold, the LORD hath a mighty and strong one, which, as a tempest of hail, and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. 3. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet. 4. And the glorious beauty which is on the head of the fat valley shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer; which, when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up. 5. In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people; 6. And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate. 7. But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way: the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. 8. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.

Here,

1. The prophet warns the kingdom of the ten tribes, of the judgments that were coming upon them for their sins, which were soon after executed by the king of Assyria, who laid their country waste, and carried the people into captivity. Ephraim had his name from *fruitfulness*, their soil being very fertile, and the products of it abundant, and the best of the kind; they had a great many fat valleys, (v. 1. 4.) and Samaria, which was situated on a hill, was, as it were, on the head of the fat valleys; their country was rich and pleasant, and as the garden of the Lord: it was the glory of Canaan, as that was the glory of all lands: their harvest and vintage were the glorious beauty on the head of their valleys, which were covered over with corn and vines. Now observe,

1. What an ill use they made of their plenty; what God gave them to serve him with, they perverted, and abused, by making it the food and fuel of their lusts.

(1.) They were puffed up with pride by it; the goodness with which God crowned their years, which should have been to him a crown of praise, was to them a crown of pride. They that are rich

in the world, are not to be high-minded, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Their king who wore the crown, was proud that he ruled over so rich a country; Samaria, their royal city, was notorious for pride. Perhaps it was usual at their festivals, or revels, to wear garlands made up of flowers and ears of corn, which they wore, in honour of their fruitful country. Pride was a sin that generally prevailed among them, and therefore the prophet, in his name who resists the proud, boldly proclaims a *Wo to the crown of pride*. If those who wear crowns be proud of them, let them not think to escape this wo. What men are proud of, be it ever so mean, is to them as a crown; he that is proud thinks himself as great as a king; but wo to those who thus exalt themselves, for they shall be abased; their pride is the preface to their destruction.

(2.) They indulged themselves in sensuality; Ephraim was notorious for drunkenness, and excess of riot; Samaria, the head of the fat valleys, was full of those that were overcome with wine; were *broken with it*, so the margin. See how foolishly drunkards act, and no marvel, when, in the very commission of the sin, they make fools and brutes of themselves; they yield, [1.] To be conquered by the sin; it overcomes them, and *brings them into bondage*, (2 Pet. ii. 19.) they are led captive by it, and the captivity is the more shameful and inglorious, as it is voluntary. Some of these wretched slaves have themselves owned that there is not a greater drudgery in the world than hard drinking. They are overcome not with the wine, but with the love of it. [2.] To be ruined by it; they are broken by wine; their constitution is broken by it, and their health ruined; they are broken in their callings and estates, and their families are brought to ruin by it; their peace with God is broken, and their souls in danger of being eternally undone, and all this for the gratification of a base lust. Wo to these drunkards of Ephraim! Ministers must bring the general woes of the word home to particular places and persons. We must say, *Wo to drunkards*; their condition is a woful condition, their brutish pleasures are to be pitied, and not envied; *they shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, (1 Cor. vi. 10.) the curse is in force against them, Deut. xxix. 19, 20. Nay, we must go further, and say, *Wo to the drunkards of such a place*; that they may hear and fear; nay, and, *Wo to this or that person*, if he be a drunkard. There is a particular wo to the drunkards of Ephraim, for they are of God's professing people, and it becomes them worse than any other; they know better, and therefore should give a better example. Some make the *crown of pride* to belong to the drunkards, and to mean the *garlands* with which they were crowned, that got the victory in their wicked drinking-matches, and drank down the rest of the company; they were proud of their being mighty to drink wine; but wo to them who thus glory in their shame.

2. The justice of God in taking away their plenty from them, which they thus abused. Their glorious beauty, the plenty they were proud of, is but a fading flower, it is meat that perishes. The most substantial fruits, if God blast them, and blow upon them, are but fading flowers, v. 1. God can easily *take away their corn in the season thereof*, (Hos. ii. 9.) and recover *locum vastatum—ground that has been alienated and is run to waste*, those goods of his, which they prepared for Baal. God has an officer ready to make a seizure for him, has one at his beck, a mighty and strong one, who is able to do the business, even the king of Assyria, who shall cast down to the earth with the hand, shall easily and effectually, and with the turn of a hand, destroy all that which they are proud of, and pleased with, v. 2. He shall throw it down to the ground.

to be broken to pieces with a strong hand, with a hand that they cannot oppose. Then the crown of pride, and the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under foot; (v. 3.) they shall lie exposed to contempt, and shall not be able to recover themselves. Drunkards, in their folly, are apt to talk proudly, and vaunt themselves most then when they most shame themselves; but they render themselves the more ridiculous by it. The beauty of their valleys, which they gloried in, will be, (1.) Like a fading flower; (as before, v. 1.) it will wither of itself, and has in itself the principles of its own corruption; it will perish in time by its own moth and rust. (2.) Like the hasty fruit, which, as soon as it is discovered, is plucked and eaten up; so the wealth of this world, beside that it is apt to decay of itself, is subject to be devoured by others, as greedily as the first ripe fruit, which is earnestly desired, Mic. vii. 1. *Thieves break through and steal.* The harvest which the worldling is proud of the hungry eat up; (Job. v. 5.) no sooner do they see the prey, but they catch at it, and swallow up all they can lay their hands on. It is likewise easily devoured, as that fruit which, being ripe before it is grown, is very small, and is soon eaten up; and there being little of it, and that of little worth, it is not reserved, but used immediately.

II. He next turns himself to the kingdom of Judah, whom he calls the residue of his people, (v. 5.) for they were but two tribes to the other ten.

1. He promises them God's favours, and that they should be taken under his guidance and protection, when the beauty of Ephraim shall be left exposed to be trodden down and eaten up, v. 5, 6. In that day, when the Assyrian army is laying Israel waste, and Judah might think that their neighbour's house being on fire, their own was in danger, in that day of treading down and perplexity, then God will be to the residue of his people all they need, and can desire; not only to the kingdom of Judah, but to those of Israel, who had kept their integrity, and, as was, probably, the case with some, betook themselves to the land of Judah, to be sheltered by good king Hezekiah. When the Assyrian, that mighty one, was in Israel as a tempest of hail, noisy and battering, as a destroying storm bearing down all before it, especially at sea, and as a flood of mighty waters overflowing the country, (v. 2.) then in that day will the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, distinguish by peculiar favours his people who have distinguished themselves by a steady and singular adherence to him, and that which they most need he will himself be to them. This very much enhances the worth of the promises, that God, covenanting to be to his people a God all-sufficient, undertakes to be himself all that to them that they can desire. (1.) He will put all the credit and honour upon them, which are requisite, not only to rescue them from contempt, but to gain them esteem and reputation. He will be to them for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty. They that wore the crown of pride looked upon God's people with disdain, and trampled upon them, and they were the song of the drunkards of Ephraim; but God will so appear for them by his providence, as to make it evident that they have his favour toward them, and that shall be to them a crown of glory; for what greater glory can any people have, than for God to own them as his own? And he will so appear in them, by his grace, as to make it evident that they have his image renewed on them, and that shall be to them a diadem of beauty: for what greater beauty can any person have than the beauty of holiness? Note, Those that have God for their God, have him for a Crown of glory, and a Diadem of beauty; for they are made to him kings and priests. (2.) He will give them all the wisdom and grace necessary to the due dis-

charge of the duty of their place. He will himself be a Spirit of judgment to them that sit in judgment; the privy-counsellors shall be guided by wisdom and discretion, and the judges govern by justice and equity. It is a great mercy to any people, when those that are called to places of power and public trust are qualified for their places; when those that sit in judgment have a spirit of judgment, a spirit of government. (3.) He will give them all the courage and boldness requisite to carry them resolutely through the difficulties and oppositions they are likely to meet with. He will be for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate, to the gates of the enemy whose cities they besiege, or to their own gates, when they sally out upon the enemies that besiege them. The strength of the soldiery depends as much upon God as the wisdom of the magistracy; and where God gives both these, he is to that people a Crown of glory. This may well be supposed to refer to Christ, and so the Chaldee Paraphrase understands it; in that day shall Messiah be a Crown of glory; Simeon calls him the *Glorious of his people Israel*: and he is made of God to us Wisdom, Righteousness, and Strength.

2. He complains of the corruptions that were found among them, and the many corrupt ones; (v. 7.) *But they also*, many of them of Judah, *have erred through wine.* There are drunkards of Jerusalem, as well as drunkards of Ephraim; and therefore the mercy of God is to be so much the more admired, that he has not blasted the glory of Judah, as he has done that of Ephraim. Sparing mercy lays us under peculiar obligations, when it is thus distinguishing. Ephraim's sins are found in Judah, and yet not Ephraim's ruins. *They have erred through wine*; their drinking to excess is itself a practical error; they think to raise their fancy by it, but they ruin their judgment, and so put a cheat upon themselves; they think to preserve their health by it, and help digestion, but they spoil their constitution, and hasten diseases and deaths. And it is the occasion of a great many errors in principle; their understanding is clouded, and conscience debauched, by it; and therefore, to support themselves in it, they espouse corrupt notions, and form their minds in favour of their lusts. Probably, some were drawn in to worship idols by their love of the wine and strong drink, which there was plenty of at their idolatrous festivals; and so they erred through wine, as Israel, for love of the daughters of Moab, joined themselves to Baal-peor.

Three things are here observed as aggravations of this sin;

(1.) That those were guilty of it, whose business it was to warn others against it, and to teach them better, and therefore who ought to have set a better example; *The priest and the prophet are swallowed up of wine*; their office is quite drowned and lost in it. The priests, as sacrificers, were obliged by a particular law to be temperate, (Lev. x. 9.) and, as rulers and magistrates, it was not for them to drink wine, Prov. xxxi. 4. The prophets were a kind of Nazarites, (as appears by Amos ii. 11.) and, as reprovers by office, were concerned to keep at the utmost distance from the sins they reproved in others; yet there were many of them ensnared in this sin. What! a priest, a prophet, a minister, and yet drunk! Tell it not in Gath. Such a scandal are they to their coat.

(2.) That the consequences of it were very pernicious, not only by the ill influence of their example, but the prophet, when he was drunk, erred in vision; the false prophets plainly discovered themselves to be so, when they were in drink. The priest *stumbled in judgment, and forgot the law*; (Prov. xxxi. 5.) he reeled and staggered as much in the operations of his mind as in the motions of

his body. What wisdom or justice can be expected from those that sacrifice reason, and virtue, and conscience, and all that is valuable, to such a lust as the love of strong drink is? Happy art thou, O land, when *thy princes eat and drink for strength, and not for drunkenness!* Eccl. x. 17.

(3.) That the disease was epidemical, and the generality of those that kept any thing of a table, were infected with it; *All tables are full of vomit,* v. 8. See what an odious thing the sin of drunkenness is, what an affront it is to human society; it is rude and ill-mannered, enough to sicken the beholders; for the tables where they eat their meat, are filthily stained with the marks of this sin, which the sinners declare as Sodom; their tables are full of vomit. So that the victor, instead of being proud of his crown, ought rather to be ashamed of it. It bodes ill to any people, when so sottish a sin as drunkenness is, becomes national.

9. Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? *them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.* 10. For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little: 11. For with stammering lips, and another tongue, will he speak to this people. 12. To whom he said, *This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing:* yet they would not hear. 13. But the word of the LORD was unto them, precept upon precept, precept upon precept: line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

The prophet here complains of the wretched stupidity of this people, that they were unteachable, and made no improvement of the means of grace which they enjoyed; they still continued as they were, their mistakes not rectified, their hearts not renewed, nor their lives reformed.

I. What it was that their prophets and ministers designed and aimed at; it was to teach them knowledge, the knowledge of God and his will, and to *make them understand doctrine,* v. 9. This is God's way of dealing with men, to enlighten men's minds first with the knowledge of his truth, and thus to gain their affections, and bring their wills into a compliance with his laws; thus he enters in by the door, whereas the thief and robber climb up another way.

II. What method they took, in pursuance of this design; they left no means untried, to do them good, but taught them as children are taught, little children that are beginning to learn, that are taken from the breast to the book; (v. 9.) for among the Jews it was common for mothers to nurse their children till they were three years old, and almost ready to go to school. And it is good to begin betimes with children, to teach them, as they are capable, the good knowledge of the Lord, and to instruct them, even when they are but newly weaned from the milk.

The prophets taught them as children are taught, for,

1. They were constant and industrious in teaching them; they took great pains with them, and with great prudence, teaching them as they needed it, and were able to bear it; (v. 10.) *Precept upon*

*precept.* *It must be so,* or, as some read it, *It has been so.* They have been taught, as children are taught to read, by *precept upon precept*, and taught to write, by *line upon line; a little here, and a little there,* a little of one thing, and a little of another, that the variety of instructions might be pleasing and inviting; a little at one time, and a little at another, that they might not have their memories overcharged; a little from one prophet, and a little from another, that every one might be pleased with his friend, and him he admired. Note, For our instruction in the things of God, it is requisite that we have precept upon precept, and line upon line: that one precept and line should be followed, and so enforced, by another; the precept of justice must be upon the precept of piety, and the precept of charity upon that of justice. Nay, it is necessary that the same precept and the same line should be often repeated, and inculcated upon us; that we may the better understand them, and the more easily recollect them when we have occasion for them. Teachers should accommodate themselves to the capacity of the learners, give them what they most need, and can best bear, and a little at a time, Deut. vi. 6, 7.

2. They accosted them in a kind manner, v. 12. God, by his prophets, said to them, "This way that we are directing you to, and directing you in, it is the rest, the only rest, *wherewith you may cause the weary to rest;* and this will be the refreshing of your own souls, and will bring rest to your country from the wars and other calamities with which it has been long harassed." Note, God, by his word, calls us to nothing but what is really for our own advantage; for the service of God is the only true rest for those that are weary of the service of sin, and there is no refreshing but under the easy yoke of the Lord Jesus.

III. What little effect all this had upon the people: they were as unapt to learn as young children newly weaned from the milk, and it was as impossible to fasten any thing upon them; (v. 9.) nay, one would choose rather to teach a child of two years old than undertake to teach them: for they have not only (like such a child) no capacity to receive what is taught them, but they are prejudiced against it. As children, they have *need of milk,* and *cannot bear strong meat,* Heb. v. 12. 1. They *would not hear,* (v. 12.) no, not that which would be rest and refreshing to them; they had no mind to hear it; the word of God commanded their serious attention, but could not gain it; they were where it was preached, but they turned a deaf ear to it, or, as it came in at one ear, it went out at the other. 2. They would not heed; it was unto them *precept upon precept, and line upon line;* (v. 13.) they went on in a road of external performances, they kept up the old custom of attending upon the prophet's preaching, and it was continually sounding in their ears; but that was all, it made no impression upon them; they had the letter of the precept, but no experience of the power and spirit of it; it was continually beating upon them, but it beat nothing into them. Nay, 3. It should seem, they ridiculed the prophet's preaching, and bantered it; the word of the Lord was unto them *Tsau latsau, kau lakau;* in the original it is in rhyme; they made a song of the prophet's words, and sang it when they were merry over their wine; David was the song of the drunkards. It is great impiety, and a high affront to God, thus to make a jest of sacred things; to speak of that vainly which should make us serious.

IV. How severely God would reckon with them for this:

1. He would deprive them of the privilege of plain preaching, and speak to them *with stammering lips and another tongue,* v. 11. They that will not understand what is plain and level to their capacity

but despise it as mean and trifling, are justly amused with that which is above them. Or, God will send foreign armies among them, whose language they understand not, to lay their country waste. Those that will not hear the comfortable voice of God's word, shall be made to hear the dreadful voice of his rod. Or, these words may be taken as denoting God's gracious condescension to their capacity in his dealing with them; he lisped to them in their own language, as nurses do to their children, with stammering lips, to humour them; he changed his voice, tried first one way, and then another; the apostle quotes it as a favour, (1 Cor. xiv. 21.) applying it to the gift of tongues, and complaining that yet for all this they would not hear.

2. He would bring utter ruin upon them; by their profane contempt of God and his word they are but hastening on their own ruin, and ripening themselves for it; it is that *they may go and fall backward*, may grow worse and worse, may depart further and further from God, and proceed from one sin to another, till they be quite broken, and snared, and taken, and ruined, v. 13. They have here a little, and there a little, of the word of God; they think it too much, and say to the seers, *See not*; but it proves too little to convert them, and will prove enough to condemn them. If it be not a *savour of life unto life*, it will be a *savour of death unto death*.

14. Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem: 15. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell we are at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves. 16. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. 17. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. 18. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. 19. From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night; and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report. 20. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. 21. For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act. 22. Now, therefore, be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts a consumption, even determined, upon the whole earth.

The prophet, having reprov'd those that made a

jest of the word of God, here goes on to reprove those that made a jest of the judgments of God, and set them at defiance; for he is a jealous God, and will not suffer either his ordinances or his providences to be brought into contempt. He addresses himself to *the scornful men who ruled in Jerusalem*, who were the magistrates of the city, v. 14. It is bad with a people, when their thrones of judgment become the seats of the scornful, when rulers are scornors; but that the rulers of Jerusalem should be men of such a character, that they should make light of God's judgments, and scorn to take notice of the tokens of his displeasure, is very sad. Who will be mourners in Zion, if they are scornors?

Observe,

1. How these scornful men lulled themselves asleep in carnal security, and even challenged God Almighty to do his worst; (v. 15.) *Ye have said, We have made a covenant with death and the grave*. They thought themselves as sure of their lives, even then when the most destroying judgments were abroad, as if they had made a bargain with death, upon a valuable consideration, not to take them away by any violence, but by old age. If we be at peace with God, and have made a covenant with him, we have in effect, made a covenant with death, and it shall come in the fittest time, that, whenever it comes, it shall be no terror to us, nor do us any real damage; death is ours, if we be Christ's: (1 Cor. ii. 22.) but to think of making death our friend, or being in league with it, while by sin we are making God our Enemy, and are at war with him, is the greatest absurdity that can be. It was a fond conceit which these scornors had, "*When the overflowing scourge shall pass through our country, and others shall fall under it, yet it shall not come to us, nor reach us, though it extend far, not bear us down, though it is an overflowing scourge*." It is the greatest folly imaginable for impenitent sinners to think that either in this world or the other they shall fare better than their neighbours. But what is the ground of their confidence? Why, truly, *We have made lies our refuge*. Either, 1. Those things which the prophets told them, would be lies and falsehood to them, and would deceive, though they themselves looked upon them as substantial fences. The protection of their idols, the promises with which their false prophets soothed them, their policy, their wealth, their interest in the people; these they confided in, and not in God: nay, these they confided in against God. Or, 2. Those things which should be lies and falsehood to the enemy, who was *flagellum Dei*—the scourge of God, the overflowing scourge; they would secure themselves by imposing upon the enemy with their stratagems of war, or their feigned submissions in treaties of peace. The rest of the cities of Judah were taken because they made an obstinate defence, but the rulers of Jerusalem hope to succeed better, they think themselves greater politicians than these of the country towns; they will compliment the king of Assyria with a promise to surrender their city, or to become tributaries to him, with a purpose at the same time to shake off his yoke as soon as the danger is over, not caring though they be found liars to him; as the expression is, Deut. xxxiii. 29. Note, Those put a cheat upon themselves, that think to gain their point by putting cheats upon those they deal with. Those that pursue their designs by trick and fraud, by mean and paltry shifts, may perhaps compass them, but cannot expect comfort in them. Honesty is the best policy. But such refuges as these are *they* driven to that depart from God, and throw themselves out of his protection.

II. How God, by the prophet, awakens them out of this sleep, and shows them the folly of their security.

1. He tells them upon what grounds they might be secure: he does not disturb their false confidences, till he has first showed them a firm bottom on which they may repose themselves, (v. 16.) *Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone.* This foundation is, (1.) The promises of God in general; his word, upon which he has caused his people to hope; his covenant with Abraham, that he would be a God to him and his; this is a foundation, a foundation of stone, firm and lasting, for faith to build upon; it is a tried stone, for all the saints have stayed themselves upon it, and it never failed them. (2.) The promise of Christ in particular, for to him this is expressly applied in the New Testament, 1 Pet. ii. 6—8. He is that Stone which is become *the Head of the corner.* The great promise of the Messiah and his kingdom, which was to begin at Jerusalem, was sufficient to make God's people easy in the worst of times; for they knew well that till he was come, *the sceptre should not depart from Judah.* Zion shall continue while this Foundation is yet to be laid there. *Thus saith the Lord Jehovah,* for the comfort of those that dare not *make lies their refuge*; "Behold, and look upon me, as one that has undertaken to *lay in Zion a Stone.*" Jesus Christ is a Foundation of God's laying; *this is the Lord's doing.* He is laid in Zion, in the church, in the holy hill. He is a tried Stone; a trying Stone, so some; a Touch-stone that shall distinguish betwixt true and counterfeit. He is a precious Stone, for such are the *foundations of the New Jerusalem*; (Rev. xxi. 19.) a Corner-stone, in whom the sides of the building are united; the *Head-stone of the corner.* And he that believes these promises, and rests upon them, *shall not make haste*, shall not run to and fro in a hurry, as men at their wits' end, shall not be shifting here and there for his own safety, nor be driven to his feet by any terrors, as the wicked man is said to be, (Job xviii. 11.) but with a fixed heart shall quietly wait the event, saying, *Welcome the will of God.* He *shall not make haste*, in his expectations, so as to anticipate the time set in the divine counsels, but, though it tarry, will wait the appointed hour, knowing that *he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.* He that believes will not make more haste than good speed, but be satisfied that God's time is the best time, and wait with patience for it. The apostle, from the LXX. explains this, (1 Pet. ii. 6.) *He that believes on him shall not be confounded*; his expectations shall not be frustrated, but far outdone.

2. He tells them that upon the grounds which they now built on, they could not be safe, but their confidences would certainly fail them; (v. 17.) *Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet.* This denotes, (1.) The building up of his church; having laid the foundation, (v. 16.) he will raise the structure, as builders do, by line and plummet, Zech. iv. 10. Righteousness shall be the line, and judgment the plummet. The church, being founded on Christ, shall be formed and reformed by the scripture, the standing rule of judgment and righteousness. *Judgment shall return unto righteousness*, Ps. xciv. 15. Or, (2.) The punishing of the church's enemies, against whom he will proceed in strict justice, according to the threatenings of the law; he will give them their deserts, and bring upon them the judgments they have challenged, but in wisdom too, and by an exact rule, that the tares may not be plucked up with the wheat. And when God comes thus to execute judgment,

[1.] These scornful men will be made ashamed of the vain hopes with which they had deluded themselves:

*First*, They designed to make lies their refuge; but it will indeed prove a refuge of lies, which *the*

*hail shall sweep away*, that tempest of hail spoken of, v. 2. They that make lies their refuge build upon the sand, and the building will fall, when the storm comes, and bury the builder in the ruins of it. They that make any thing their hiding-place but Christ, the waters shall overflow it, as every shelter but the ark was overtopped and overthrown by the waters of the deluge. Such is the hope of the hypocrite, this will come of all his confidences.

*Secondly*, They boasted of a covenant with death, and an agreement with the grave; but it shall be disannulled, as made without *his* consent that has the keys and sovereign command of hell and death. Those do but delude themselves, that think by any wiles to evade the judgments of God.

*Thirdly*, They fancied that when the overflowing scourge should pass through the land, it should not come near them; but the prophet tells them that then, when others were falling by the common calamity, they should not only share in it, but should be trodden down by it; "Ye shall be to it for a treading down, it shall triumph over you as much as over any other, and you shall become its easy prey."

They are further told, (v. 19.) 1. That it shall begin with them; they shall be so far from escaping it, that they shall be the first that shall fall by it; *From the time it goes forth, it shall take you*, as if it came on purpose to seize you. 2. That it shall pursue them close; *"Morning by morning shall it pass over"*; as duly as the day returns, you shall hear of some desolation or other made by it; for divine justice will follow its blow; you shall never be safe or easy, by day or by night; there shall be a pestilence walking in darkness, and a destruction wasting at noon-day." 3. That there shall be no avoiding it; "The understanding of the report of its approach shall not give you any opportunity to make your escape, for there shall be no way of escape open; but it shall be only a vexation, you shall see it coming, and not see how to help yourselves." Or, "The very report of it at a distance will be a terror to you; what then will the thing itself be?" Evil tidings are a terror and vexation to scornors, but he whose heart is fixed, *trusting in God, is not afraid of them*; whereas, when the *overflowing scourge* comes, then all the comforts and confidences of scornors fail them, v. 20. (1.) That in which they thought to repose themselves, reaches not to the length of their expectations; *The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself upon it*, so that he is forced to cramp and contract himself. (2.) That in which they thought to shelter themselves proves insufficient to answer the intention; *The covering is narrower than that a man can wrap himself in it.* Those that do not build upon Christ, as their Foundation, but rest in a righteousness of their own, will prove in the end thus to have deceived themselves, they can never be easy, safe, or warm; the bed is too short, the covering is too narrow; like our first parents' fig-leaves, the shame of their nakedness will still appear.

[2.] God will be glorified in the accomplishment of his counsels, v. 21. When God comes to contend with these scornors, *First*, He will do his work, and bring to pass his act, he will work for his own honour and glory, according to his own purpose; the work shall appear, to all that see it, to be the work of God as the righteous Judge of the earth. *Secondly*, He will do it now against his people, as formerly he did it against their enemies; by which his justice will appear to be impartial; he will now *rise up against Jerusalem*, as, in David's time against the Philistines in mount Perazim, (2 Sam. v. 20.) and as, in Joshua's time, against the Canaanites in the valley of Gibeon. If those that profess themselves members of God's church, by their pride and



scornfulness make themselves like Philistines and Canaanites, they must expect to be dealt with as such. *Thirdly*, This will be his strange work, his strange act, his foreign deed: it is work that he is backward to, he rather delights in showing mercy, and *does not afflict willingly*; it is work that he is not used to; as to his own people, he protects and favours them; it is a strange work indeed, if he *turn to be their enemy, and fight against them*; (ch. lxiii. 10.) it is a work that all the neighbours will stand amazed at; (Deut. xxix. 24.) and therefore the ruins of Jerusalem are said to be *an astonishment*, Jer. xxv. 18.

*Lastly*, We have the use and application of all this; (v. 22.) "*Therefore be ye not mockers; dare not to ridicule either the reproofs of God's word, or the approaches of his judgments.*" *Mocking the messengers of the Lord* was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin. The consideration of the judgments of God that are coming upon hypocritical professors, should effectually silence mockers, and make them serious; "*Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong; both the bands by which you are bound under the dominion of sin,*" (for there is little hope of the conversion of mockers,) "*and the bands by which you are bound over to the judgments of God.*" God has bands of justice strong enough to hold those that break all the bonds of his law in sunder, and cast away all his cords from them. Let not these mockers make light of divine threatenings, for the prophet (who is one of those with whom the secret of the Lord is) assures them that the Lord God of hosts has, in his hearing, determined *a consumption upon the whole earth*; and can they think to escape? Or shall their unbelief invalidate the threatening?

23. Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. 24. Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? 25. When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley, and the rye, in their place? 26. For his God doth instruct him to discretion, *and doth teach him*. 27. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. 28. Bread-corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break *it with the wheel of his cart*, nor bruise *it with his horsemen*. 29. This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, *which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working*.

This parable, which (as many of our Saviour's parables) is borrowed from the husbandman's calling, is ushered in with a solemn preface demanding attention, *He that has ears to hear, let him hear, hear and understand*, v. 23.

I. The parable here is plain enough, that the husbandman applies himself to the business of his calling with a great deal of pains and prudence, *secundum artem—according to rule*, and, as his judgment directs him, observes a method and order in his work. 1. In his ploughing and sowing; *Does the ploughman plough all day to sow?* Yes, he does, and he *ploughs in hope*, and *sows in hope*, I

Cor. ix. 10. Does he open and *break the clods*? Yes, he does, that it may be fit to receive the seed. And when he has thus *made plain the face thereof*, does he not sow his seed, seed suitable to the soil? For the husbandman knows what grain is fit for clayey ground, and what for sandy ground, and accordingly he sows each in its place; *wheat in the principal place*, (so the margin reads it); for it is the principal grain, and was a staple-commodity of Canaan, (Ezek. xxvii. 17.) and *barley in the appointed place*. The wisdom and goodness of the God of nature are to be observed in this, that, to oblige his creatures with a grateful variety of productions, he has suited to them an agreeable variety of earths. 2. In his threshing, v. 27, 28. This also he proportions to the grain that is to be threshed out; *the fitches and the cummin*, being easily got out of their husk or ear, are only threshed with *a staff and a rod*; but *the bread-corn* requires more force, and therefore that must be bruised with *a threshing instrument*, a sledge shod with iron, that was drawn to and fro over it, to beat out the corn; and yet he will not be ever threshing it, nor any longer than is necessary to loosen the corn from the chaff; he will not break it, or crush it into the ground with *the wheel of his cart*, nor *bruise it to pieces with his horsemen*; the grinding of it is reserved for another operation. Observe, by the way, what pains are to be taken, not only for the earning, but for the preparing of our necessary food; and yet, after all, it is *meat that perishes*. Shall we then grudge to labour much more for the *meat which endures to everlasting life*? Bread-corn is bruised; Christ was; *it pleased the Lord to bruise him*, that he might be the Bread of life to us.

II. The interpretation of the parable is not so plain. Most interpreters make it a further answer to those who set the judgments of God at defiance; "*Let them know that as the husbandman will not be always ploughing, but will at length sow his seed, so God will not be always threatening, but will at length execute his threatenings, and bring upon sinners the judgments they have deserved; but in wisdom, and in proportion to their strength, that they may not be ruined, but reformed, and brought to repentance, by them.*" But I think we may give this parable a greater latitude in the exposition of it.

1. In general; that God, who gives the husbandman this wisdom, is, doubtless, himself infinitely wise. It is God that *instructs the husbandman to discretion*, as *his God*, v. 26. Husbandmen have need of discretion, wherewith to order their affairs, and ought not to undertake that business unless they do in some measure understand it; and they should by observation and experience endeavour to improve themselves in the knowledge of it. Since *the king himself is served of the field*, the advancing of the art of husbandry is a common service to mankind, more than the cultivating of most other arts. The skill of the husbandman is from God, as every good and perfect gift is. This takes off something of the weight and terror of the sentence passed on man for sin, that when God, in execution of it, sent man to till the ground, he taught him how to do it most to his advantage, else, in the greatness of his folly, he might have been for ever *tilling the sand of the sea*, labouring to no purpose. It is he that gives men capacity for this business, an inclination to it, and a delight in it; and if some were not by Providence cut out for it, and made to rejoice, as Issachar, that tribe of husbandmen, in their tents, notwithstanding the toil and fatigue of this business, we should soon want the supports of life. If some are more discreet and judicious in managing these or any other affairs than others are, God must be acknowledged in it; and to him husbandmen must seek for direction in their business; for they, above

other men, have an immediate dependence upon the divine providence. As to the other instance of the husbandman's conduct in threshing his corn, it is said, *This also comes forth from the Lord of hosts, v. 29.* Even the plainest dictates of sense and reason must be acknowledged to *come forth from the Lord of hosts.* And if it is from him that men do things wisely and discreetly, we must needs acknowledge him to be wise in counsel, and excellent in working. God's working is according to his will, he never acts against his own mind, as men often do, and there is a counsel in his whole will; he is *therefore* excellent in working, because he is wonderful in counsel.

2. God's church is his husbandry. 1 Cor. iii. 9. If Christ is the true Vine, his Father is the Husbandman, (John xv. 1,) and he is continually, by his word and ordinances, cultivating it. *Does the ploughman plough all day, and break the clods of his ground, that it may receive the seed, and does not God by his ministers break up the fallow ground? Does not the ploughman, when the ground is fitted for the seed, cast in the seed in its proper soil? He does so, and so the great God sows his word by the hand of his ministers, (Matth. xiii. 19.) who are to divide the word of truth, and give every one their portion. Whatever the soil of the heart is, there is some seed or other in the word proper for it. And as the word of God, so the rod of God, is thus wisely made use of. Afflictions are God's threshing instruments, designed to loosen us from the world, to part between us and our chaff, and to prepare us for use. And as to these, God will make use of them as there is occasion; but he will proportion them to our strength, they shall be no heavier than there is need. If the rod and the staff will answer the end, he will not make use of his cart-wheel and his horsemen. And where these are necessary, as for the bruising of the bread-corn, (which will not otherwise be got clean from the straw,) yet he will not be ever threshing it, will not always chide, but his anger shall endure but for a moment; nor will he crush under his feet the prisoners of the earth. And herein we must acknowledge him wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.*

### CHAP. XXIX.

This wo to Ariel, which we have in this chapter, is the same with the *burthen of the valley of vision*, (ch. 22. 1.) and (it is very probable) points at the same event—the besieging of Jerusalem by the Assyrian army, which was cut off there by an angel; yet it is applicable to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and its last desolations by the Romans. Here is, I. The event itself foretold, that Jerusalem should be greatly distressed; (v. 1. .4, 6,) but that their enemies, who distressed them, should be baffled and defeated, v. 5, 7, 8. II. A reproof to three sorts of sinners; 1. Those that were stupid and regardless of the warnings which the prophet gave them, v. 9. 12. 2. Those that were formal and hypocritical in their religious performances, v. 13, 14. 3. Those politicians that atheistically and profanely despised God's providence, and set up their own projects in competition with it, v. 15. 17. III. Precious promises of grace and mercy to a distinguishing remnant whom God would sanctify, and in whom he would be sanctified when their enemies and persecutors should be cut off, v. 18. 24.

1. **WO** to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices. 2. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel. 3. And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee. 4. And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech

shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be as of one that hath a familiar spirit out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust. 5. Moreover, the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away; yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly. 6. Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire. 7. And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night-vision. 8. It shall even be as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion.

That it is Jerusalem which is here called *Ariel*, is agreed, for that was the city where David dwelt; that part of it which was called *Zion*, was in a particular manner the city of David, in which both the temple and the palace were; but why it is so called is very uncertain; probably, the name and the reason were, then, well known. Cities, as well as persons, get surnames and nicknames. *Ariel* signifies the *lion of God, or the strong lion*; as the lion is king among beasts, so was Jerusalem among the cities, giving law to all about her; it was the *city of the great King*, (Ps. xlviii. 1, 2.) it was the head city of Judah, who is called a *lion's whelp*, (Gen. xlix. 9.) and whose ensign was a lion; and he that is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, was the glory of it. Jerusalem was a terror sometimes to the neighbouring nations, and while she was a righteous city, was bold as a lion. Some make *Ariel* to signify the *altar of burnt-offerings*, which devoured the beasts offered in sacrifice, as the lion does his prey. Wo to that altar in the city where David dwelt; that was destroyed with the temple by the Chaldeans. I rather take it as a wo to Jerusalem, Jerusalem; it is repeated here, as it is Matth. xxiii. 37. that it might be the more awakening. Here is,

I. The distress of Jerusalem foretold; though Jerusalem be a strong city, as a lion, though a holy city, as a lion of God, yet, if iniquity be found there, wo be to it. It was the *city where David dwelt*, it was he that brought that to it, which was its glory, and which made it a type of the gospel-church, and his dwelling in it was typical of Christ's residence in his church. This is mentioned as an aggravation of Jerusalem's sin, that in it were set both the testimony of Israel, and the *thrones of the house of David*.

1. Let Jerusalem know that her external performance of religious services will not serve as an exemption from the judgments of God; (v. 1.) "*Add ye year to year*; go on in the road of your annual feasts, let all your males appear there three times a year before the Lord, and none empty, according to the law and custom, and let them never miss any of these solemnities; *let them kill the sacrifices*, as they used to do, but, as long as their lives are unreformed, and their hearts unhumiliated, let them not think thus to pacify an offended God, and to turn away his wrath." Note, Hypocrites may be found

in a constant track of devout exercises, and treading around in them, and with these they may flatter themselves, but can never please God, or make their peace with him.

2. Let her know that God is coming forth against her in displeasure, that she shall be *visited of the Lord of hosts*, (v. 6.) her sins shall be inquired into, and punished; God will reckon for them with terrible judgments, with the frightful alarms and rueful desolations of war, which shall be like thunder and earthquakes, storms and tempests, and devouring fire, especially upon the account of the great noise. When a foreign enemy was not in the borders, but in the bowels, of their country, roaring and ravaging, and laying all waste, especially such an army as that of the Assyrians, whose commanders being so very insolent, as appears by the conduct of Rabshakeh, the common soldiers, no doubt, were much more rude; they might see the Lord of those hosts visiting them with thunder and storm. Yet this being here said to be a *great noise*, perhaps it is intimated that they shall be worse frightened than hurt. Particularly,

(1.) Jerusalem shall be besieged, straitly besieged. He does not say, *I will destroy Ariel*, but, *I will distress Ariel*; and she is *therefore* brought into distress, that, being thereby awakened to repent and reform, she may not be brought to destruction; (v. 3.) *I will camp against thee round about*. It was the enemy's army that encamped against it; but God says that he will do it, for they are his hand, he does it by them. God had often, and long, by a host of angels, encamped for them round about them, for their protection and deliverance; but now he was *turned to be their Enemy*, and fought against them. The siege laid against them was of his laying, and the forts raised against them were of his raising. Note, When men fight against us, we must, in them, see God contending with us.

(2.) She shall be in grief to see the country laid waste, and all the fenced cities of Judah in the enemies' hand; *There shall be heaviness and sorrow*, (v. 2.) *mourning and lamentation*; so these two words are sometimes rendered. Those that are most merry and jovial, are, commonly, when they come to be in distress, most overwhelmed with heaviness and sorrow; their laughter is then turned into mourning. "All Jerusalem shall then be unto me as Ariel, as the altar, with fire upon it, and slain victims about it;" so it was, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans; and many, no doubt, were slain, when it was besieged by the Assyrians. The whole city shall be an altar, in which sinners, falling by the judgments that are abroad, shall be as victims to divine justice. Or thus; *There shall be heaviness and sorrow*; they shall repent, and reform, and return to God, and then it shall be to me as Ariel. Jerusalem shall be like itself, shall become to me a Jerusalem again, a holy city, *ch. i. 26*.

(3.) She shall be humbled and mortified, and made submissive; (v. 4.) "*Thou shalt be brought down from the height of arrogance and insolence to which thou art come: the proud looks and the proud language shall be brought down by one humbling providence after another.*" Those that despised God's judgments, shall be humbled by them; for the proudest sinners shall either bend or break before him. They had talked big, had *lifted up the horn on high*, and had *spoken with a stiff neck*; (Ps. lxxv. 5.) but now *thou shalt speak out of the ground, out of the dust*; as one that has a familiar spirit, *whispering out of the dust*. This intimates that they should be faint and feeble, not able to speak up, nor to say all they would say; but, as those who are sick, or whose spirits are ready to fail, their speech shall be low and interrupted; and that they should

be fearful, and in consternation, forced to speak low as being afraid lest their enemies should overhear them, and take advantage against them; and that they should be tame, and obliged to submit to the conquerors. When Hezekiah submitted to the king of Assyria, saying, *I have offended, that which thou puttest on me I will bear*, (2 Kings xviii. 14.) then his speech was low, out of the dust. God can make those to crouch, that have been most daring, and quite dispirit them.

II. The destruction of Jerusalem's enemies is foretold, for the comfort of all that were her friends and well-wishers in this distress; (v. 5, 7.) "*Thou shalt be brought down, (v. 4.) to speak out of the dust*; so low thou shalt be reduced. *But*" (so it may be rendered) "*the multitude of thy strangers and thy terrible ones*, the numerous armies of the enemy, shall themselves be like small dust, not able to speak at all, or so much as whisper, but as *chaff that passes away*. Thou shalt be abased, but they shall be quite dispersed, smitten and slain after another manner, (*ch. xxvii. 7.*) they shall pass away, yea, it shall be at an instant, suddenly; the enemy shall be surprised with the destruction, and you with the salvation." The army of the Assyrians was by an angel laid dead upon the spot, in an instant, suddenly. Such will be the destruction of the enemies of the gospel-Jerusalem; *in one hour is their judgment come*, Rev. xviii. 10. Again, (v. 6.) *Thou shalt be visited*; or, as it used to be rendered, *She shall be visited with thunder and a great noise*. Thou shalt be put into a fright which thou shalt soon recover. But (v. 7.) the multitude of the nations that fight against her, shall be as *a dream of a night-vision*; they and their prosperity and success shall soon vanish past recall. *The multitude of the nations that fight against Zion*, shall be as a hungry man, who dreams that he eats, but still is hungry; that is, 1. Whereas they hoped to make a prey of Jerusalem, and to enrich themselves with the plunder of that opulent city, their hopes shall prove vain dreams, with which their fancies may please and sport themselves for awhile, but they shall be disappointed. They fancied themselves masters of Jerusalem, but shall never be so. 2. They themselves, and all their pomp, and power, and prosperity, shall vanish like a dream, when one awakes; shall be of as little value, and as short continuance, Ps. lxxiii. 20. He shall *fly away as a dream*, Job xx. 8. The army of Sennacherib vanished and was gone quickly, though it had filled the country as a dream fills a man's head; especially as a dream of meat fills the head of him that went to bed hungry.

Many understand these verses as part of the threatening of wrath, when God comes to distress Jerusalem, and lay siege to her. (1.) The multitude of her friends, whom she relies upon for help, shall do her no good; for though they are terrible ones, they shall be like the small dust, and shall pass away. (2.) The multitude of her enemies shall never think they can do her mischief enough; but, when they have devoured her much, still they shall be but like a man who dreams he eats, hungry, and greedy to devour her more.

9. Stay yourselves and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. 10. For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers, hath he covered. 11. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men

deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed. 12. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. 13. Wherefore the LORD said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: 14. Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, *even* a marvellous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. 15. Wo unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? 16. Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?

Here,

I. The prophet stands amazed at the stupidity of the greatest part of the Jewish nation. They had Levites, who taught the *good knowledge of the Lord*, and had encouragement from Hzekiah in doing so, 2 Chron. xxx. 22. They had prophets, who brought them messages immediately from God, and signified to them what were the causes, and what should be the effects, of God's displeasure against them. Now one would think, *surely this great nation*, that has all the advantages of divine revelation, is a *wise and understanding people*, Deut. iv. 6. But alas! it was quite otherwise, v. 9. The prophet directs himself to the sober thinking part of them, calling upon them to be affected with the general carelessness of their neighbours. It may be read, "They delay, they put off their repentance, but wonder ye that they should be so sottish; they sport themselves with their own deceivings, they riot and revel, but do ye cry out, lament their folly, cry to God by prayer for them. The more insensible they are of the hand of God gone out against them, the more do you lay to heart these things." Note, The security of sinners in their sinful ways is just matter of lamentation and wonder to all serious people, who should think themselves concerned to pray for those that do not pray for themselves. But what is the matter? What are we thus to wonder at?

1. We may well wonder that the generality of the people are so sottish and brutish, and so infatuated, as if they were intoxicated; *They are drunken, but not with wine*; (not with wine only, with that they were often drunk;) and they *erred through wine*, ch. xxviii. 7. They were drunk with the love of pleasures, with prejudices against religion, and with the corrupt principles they had imbibed; like drunken men, they know not what they do or say, or whither they go. They are not sensible of the divine rebukes they are under. *They have beaten me, and I felt it not*, says the drunkard, Prov. xxiii. 35. God speaks to them once, yea twice; but, like men drunk, they perceive it not,

they understand it not, but forget the law. They stagger in their counsels, are unstable and unsteady, and stumble at every thing that lies in their way. There is such a thing as spiritual drunkenness.

2. It is yet more strange that God himself has *poured out upon them a spirit of deep sleep*, and has *closed their eyes*, (v. 10.) that he who bids them awake, and open their eyes, should yet lay them to sleep, and shut their eyes; but it is in a way of righteous judgment, to punish them for their *loving darkness rather than light*, their loving sleep. When God by his prophets called them, they said, *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber*; and therefore he gave them up to strong delusions, and said, *Sleep on now*. This is applied to the unbelieving Jews, who rejected the gospel of Christ, and were justly hardened in their infidelity, till wrath came upon them to the uttermost; (Rom. xi. 8.) *God has given them the spirit of slumber*. And we have reason to fear it is the woful case of many who live in the midst of gospel-light.

3. It is very sad that this should be the case of those who were their prophets, and rulers, and seers; that they who should be their guides, are themselves blindfolded; and it is easy to tell what the fatal consequences will be when he blind lead the blind. This was fulfilled when, in the latter days of the Jewish church, the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, were the great opposers of Christ and his gospel, and brought themselves under a judicial infatuation.

4. The sad effect of this was, that all the means of conviction, knowledge, and grace, which they enjoyed, were ineffectual, and did not answer the end; (v. 11, 12.) "*The vision of all the prophets, true and false, is become to you as the words of a book, or letter, that is sealed up*; you cannot discern the truth of the real visions, and the falsehood of the pretended ones." Or, every vision particularly that this prophet had seen for them, and published to them, was become unintelligible; they had it among them, but were never the wiser for it, any more than a man (though a good scholar) is for a book delivered to him sealed up, and which he must not open the seals of. He sees it is a book, and that is all, he knows nothing of what is in it. So they knew that what Isaiah said was a vision and prophecy, but the meaning of it was hid from them; it was only a sound of words to them, which they were not at all alarmed by, or affected with: it answered not the intention, for it made no impression at all upon them. Neither the learned nor the unlearned were the better for all the messages God sent them by his servants the prophets, nor desired to be so. The ordinary sort of people excused themselves from regarding what the prophets said, with their want of learning and a liberal education; as if they were not concerned to know and do the will of God, because they were not bred scholars; *It is nothing to me, I am not learned*. Those of better rank pretended that the prophet had a peculiar way of speaking, which was obscure to them, and which, though they were men of letters, they had not been used to; and, *Si non vis intelligi, debes negligi*—*If you wish not to be understood, you deserve to be neglected*. Both these are groundless pretences; for God's prophets have been no unfaithful debtors either to the wise or to the unwise, Rom. i. 14. Or, we may take it thus; the book of prophecy was given to them sealed, so that they could not read it, as a just judgment upon them; because it had often been delivered to them unsealed, and they would not take pains to learn the language of it, and then made excuse for their not reading it, because they were not learned. "But observe, The vision is become thus to you, whose minds the god of this world has blinded; but it is

not so in itself, it is not so to all; the same vision which to you is a *savour of death unto death*, to others is, and shall be, a *savour of life unto life*." Knowledge is easy to him that understands.

II. The prophet, in God's name, threatens those that were formal and hypocritical in their exercises of devotion, v. 13, 14. Observe here.

1. The sin that is here charged upon them—dissembling with God in their religious performances. v. 13. He that knows the heart, and cannot be imposed upon with shows and pretences, charges it upon them, whether their hearts condemn them for it, or no. He that is greater than the heart, and knows all things, knows that though they *draw nigh to him with their mouth, and honour him with their lips*, yet they are not sincere in it. To worship God is to make our approaches to him, and to present our adorations of him; it is to draw nigh to him as those that have business with him, with an intention therein to honour him. This we are to do with our mouth and with our lips, in speaking of him, and in speaking to him; we must *render to him the calves of our lips*, Hosea xiv. 2. And if the heart be full of his love and fear, out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak. But there are many whose religion is lip-labour only. They say that which expresses an approach to God and an adoration of him, but it is only from the teeth outward. For, (1.) They do not apply their minds to the service; when they pretend to be speaking to God, they are thinking of a thousand impertinences; *They have removed their hearts far from me*, that they might not be employed in prayer, nor come within reach of the word. When work was to be done for God, which required the heart, that was sent out of the way on purpose, with the fool's eyes into the ends of the earth. (2.) They do not make the word of God the rule of their worship, nor his will their reason; *Their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men*. They worshipped the God of Israel, not according to his appointment, but their own inventions; the directions of their false prophets or their idolatrous kings, or their usages of the nations that were round about them; the tradition of the elders was of more value and validity with them than the laws which God commanded Moses. Or, if they did worship God in a way conformable to his institution, in the days of Hezekiah, a great reformer, they had more an eye to the precept of the king than to God's command. This our Saviour applies to the Jews in his time, who were formal in their devotions, and wedded to their own inventions, and pronounces concerning them, that in vain they did worship God. Matt. xv. 8, 9.

2. It is a spiritual judgment with which God threatens to punish them for their spiritual wickedness; (v. 14.) *I will add to do a marvellous work*. They did one strange thing, they removed all sincerity from their hearts; now God will go on and do another, he will remove all sagacity from their heads; *the wisdom of their wise men shall perish*. They played the hypocrite, and thought to put a cheat upon God, and now they are left to themselves to play the fool; and not only to put a cheat upon themselves, but to be easily cheated by all about them. Those that make religion no more than a pretence, to serve a turn, are out in their politics; and it is just with God to deprive those of their understanding, who part with their uprightness. This was fulfilled in the wretched infatuation which the Jewish nation were manifestly under, after they had rejected the gospel of Christ; they removed their hearts far from God, and therefore God justly removed wisdom far from them, and hid from their eyes the things that belonged even to their temporal peace. This is a marvellous work; it is surpris-

ing, it is astonishing, that wise men should of a sudden lose their wisdom, and be given up to strong delusions. Judgments on the mind, though least taken notice of, are to be most wondered at.

III. He shows the folly of those that thought to act separately and secretly from God, and were carrying on designs independent upon God, and which they projected to conceal from his all-seeing eye.

Here we have, 1. Their politics described; (v. 15.) *They seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord*, that he may not know either what they do, or what they design; they say, "Who sees us? No man, and therefore not God himself." The consultations they had about their own safety, they kept to themselves, and never asked God's advice concerning them; nay, they knew they were displeasing to him, but thought they could conceal them from him; and if he did not know them, he could not baffle and defeat them. See what foolish, fruitless pains sinners take in their sinful ways; they seek deep, they sink deep, to hide their counsel from the Lord, who sits in heaven, and laughs at them. Note, A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom both of the carnal worships and of the carnal confidences of hypocrites; Ps. xciv. 7. Ezek. viii. 12.—ix. 9.

2. The absurdity of their politics demonstrated; (v. 16.) *"Surely your turning of things upside down thus, your various projects, turning your affairs this and that way to make them shape as you would have them; or, rather, your inverting the order of things, and thinking to make God's providence give attendance to your projects, and that God must know no more than you think fit, which is perfectly turning things upside down, and beginning at the wrong end, it shall be esteemed as the potter's clay; God will turn and manage you, and all your counsels, with as much ease and as absolute a power, as the potter forms and fashions his clay."* See how God despises, and therefore what little reason we have to dread, those contrivances of men, that are carried on *without God*, particularly these *against him*. They that think to hide their counsels from God; (1.) They do, in effect, deny him to be their Creator. It is as if the work should say of him that made it, "He made me not, I made myself." If God made us, he certainly knows us, as the psalmist shows, Ps. cxxxix. 1, 13—15. So that they who say that he does not see them, might as well say that he did not make them. Much of the wickedness of the wicked arises from this, they forget that God formed them, Deut. xxxii. 18. Or, (2.) Which comes all to one, they deny him to be a wise Creator; *The thing framed saith of him that framed it, He had no understanding*: for if he had understanding to make us so curiously, especially to make us intelligent beings, and to *put understanding into the inward part*, (Job xxxviii. 36.) no doubt he has understanding to know us, and all we say and do. As they that quarrel with God, so they that think to conceal themselves from him, do, in effect, charge him with folly; *but he that formed the eye, shall he not see?* Ps. xciv. 9.

17. *Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?* 18. And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. 19. The meek also shall increase *their joy in the Lord*, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. 20. For the terrible one is brought

to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off: 21. That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought. 22. Therefore thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. 23. But when he seeth his children, the work of my hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel. 24. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.

They that thought to hide their counsels from the Lord, were said to turn things upside down, (v. 16.) and they intended to do it unknown to God; but God here tells them that he will turn things upside down his way; and let us see whose word shall stand, his or theirs. They disbelieve Providence; "Wait awhile," says God, "and you shall be convinced by ocular demonstration, that there is a God who governs the world, and that he governs it, and orders all the changes that are in it, for the good of his church." The wonderful revolution here foretold may refer primarily to the happy settlement of the affairs of Judah and Jerusalem after the defeat of Sennacherib's attempt, and the repose which good people then enjoyed, when they were delivered from the alarms of the sword both of war and persecution. But it may look further, to the rejection of the Jews at the first planting of the gospel, (for their hypocrisy and infidelity were here foretold, v. 13.) and the admission of the Gentiles into the church.

In general, it is a great and surprising change that is here foretold, v. 17. Lebanon, that was a forest, is turned into a fruitful field; and Carmel, that was a fruitful field, shall become a forest. It is a counter-change. Note, Great changes, both for the better, and for the worse, are often made in a very little while. It was a sign given them of the defeat of Sennacherib, that the ground should be more than ordinarily fruitful; (*ch.* xxxvii. 30.) *Ye shall eat this year such as grows of itself:* food for man shall be (as food for beasts is) the spontaneous product of the soil; then Lebanon became a fruitful field, so fruitful, that that which used to be reckoned a fruitful field, in comparison with it, shall be looked upon but as a forest. When a great harvest of souls was gathered in to Christ from among the Gentiles, then the wilderness was turned into a fruitful field, and the Jewish church, that had long been a fruitful field, became a desolate and deserted forest, *ch.* liv. 1.

In particular, 1. Those that were ignorant shall become intelligent, v. 18. Those that understand not this prophecy, (but it was to them as a sealed book, v. 11.) shall, when it is accomplished, understand it, and shall acknowledge, not only the hand of God in the event, but the voice of God in the prediction of it. *The deaf shall then hear the words of the book:* the fulfilling of prophecy is the best exposition of it. The poor Gentiles shall then have divine revelation brought among them; and those that sat in darkness shall see a great light; those that were blind shall see out of obscurity; for the gospel was sent to them to *open their eyes*, Acts xxvi. 18. Observe, In order to the making of men fruitful in good affections and actions, the course God's

grace takes with them is, to open their understandings, and make them hear the words of God's book.

2. Those that were erroneous shall become orthodox; (v. 24.) *They that erred in spirit*, that were under mistakes and misapprehensions concerning the words of the book, and the meaning of them, they shall come to understanding, to a right understanding of things; the Spirit of truth shall rectify their mistakes, and lead them into all truth. This should encourage us to pray for *those that have erred, and are deceived*, that God can, and often does, bring such to understanding. They that murmured at the truths of God as hard sayings, and loved to pick quarrels with them, shall learn the true meaning of these doctrines, and then they will be better reconciled to them. They that erred concerning the providence of God, as to public affairs, and murmured at the dispensals of it, when they shall see the issue of things, shall better understand them, and be aware of what God was designing in all, Hosea xiv. 9.

3. Those that were melancholy shall become cheerful and pleasant; (v. 19.) *The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord.* Those who are poor in the world, and poor in spirit, who, being in affliction, accommodate themselves to their affliction—are purely passive, and not passionate, when they see God appearing for them, they shall *add, or repeat, joy in the Lord.* This intimates, that even in their distress they kept up their joy in the Lord, but now they increased it. Note, They who, when they are in trouble, can truly rejoice in God, shall soon have cause given them greatly to rejoice in him. When joy in the world is decreasing and fading, joy in God is increasing and getting ground. This shining light shall shine more and more; for that which is aimed at is, that *this joy may be full.* Even the *poor among men* may rejoice in the Holy One of Israel, and their poverty needs not deprive them of that joy, Heb. iii. 17, 18. And the meek, the humble, the patient, and dispassionate, shall grow in this joy. Note, the grace of meekness will contribute very much to the increase of our holy joy.

4. The enemies that were formidable shall become despicable. Sennacherib, that terrible one, and his great army, that put the country into such a consternation, shall be *brought to nought*, (v. 20.) shall be quite disabled to do any further mischief. The power of Satan, that terrible one indeed, shall be broken by the prevalence of Christ's gospel; and they that were subject to bondage, through fear of him that had the power of death, shall be delivered, Heb. ii. 14, 15.

5. The persecutors that were vexatious shall be quieted; and so those they were troublesome to shall be quiet from the fear of them. To complete the repose of God's people, not only the terrible one from abroad shall be brought to nought, but the scorners at home too shall be consumed and cut off by Hezekiah's reformation. Those are a happy people, and likely to be so, who, when God gives them victory and success against their terrible enemies abroad, take care to suppress vice and profaneness, and the spirit of persecution, those more dangerous enemies at home. Or, They shall be consumed and cut off by the judgments of God, shall be singled out to be made examples of. Or, They shall insensibly waste away, being put to confusion by the fulfilling of those predictions which they had made a jest of.

Observe, What had been the wickedness of these scorners, for which they should be cut off; they had been persecutors of God's people and prophets, probably of the prophet Isaiah particularly, and therefore he complains thus feelingly of them, and of



their subtle malice. Some, as informers and persecutors, others, as judges, did all they could to take away his life, or, at least, his liberty. And this is very applicable to the chief priests and Pharisees, who persecuted Christ and his apostles, and for that sin they and their nation of scornors were cut off and consumed. (1.) They ridiculed the prophets and the serious professors of religion; they despised them, and did their utmost to bring them into contempt; they were scornors, and sat in the seat of the scornful. (2.) They lay in wait for an occasion against them; by their spies they watch for iniquity, to see if they can lay hold on any thing that is said or done, that may be called *an iniquity*. Or, They themselves watch for an opportunity to do mischief, as Judas did to betray our Lord Jesus. (3.) They took advantage against them for the least slip of the tongue; and if a thing were ever so little said amiss, it served them to ground an indictment upon. They *made a man*, though he were ever so wise and good a man, though he were a man of God, an *offender for a word*, a word mischosen or misplaced, when they could not but know that it was well-meant. They cavilled at every word that the prophets spake to them by way of admonition, though ever so innocently spoken, and without any design to affront them. They put the worst construction upon what was said, and made it criminal by strained innuendos. Those who consider how apt we are to speak unadvisedly, and to mistake what we hear, will think it very unjust and unfair to *make a man an offender for a word*. (4.) They did all they could to bring those into trouble, that dealt faithfully with them, and told them of their faults. Those that *reprove in the gates*, reprovers by office, that were bound by the duty of their place, as prophets, as judges, and magistrates, to show people their transgressions, they hated these, and laid snares for them, as the Pharisees' emissaries, who were sent to watch our Saviour, that they might *entangle him in his talk*, (Matth. xxii. 15.) that they might have something to lay to his charge, which might render him odious to the people, or obnoxious to the government; *so persecuted they the prophets*; and it is next to impossible for the most cautious to place their words so warily, as to escape such snares. See how base wicked people are, who bear ill-will to those who, out of good-will to them, seek to save their souls from death: and see what need reprovers have both of courage to do their duty, and of prudence to avoid the snare. (5.) They pervert judgment, and will never let an honest man carry an honest cause; *They turn aside the just for a thing of nought*; they condemn him, or give the cause against him, upon no evidence, no colour, or pretence, whatsoever. They run a man down, and misrepresent him, by all the little arts and tricks they can devise, as they did our Saviour. We must not think it strange if we see the best of men thus treated; *the disciple is not greater than his Master*. But wait awhile, and God will not only *bring forth their righteousness*, but *cut off and consume these scornors*.

6. Jacob, who was made to blush by the reproaches, and made to tremble by the threatenings, of his enemies, shall now be relieved both against his shame and against his fear, by the rolling away of those reproaches, and the defeating of those threatenings; (v. 22.) *Thus the Lord saith, who redeemed Abraham*; called him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and so rescued him from the idolatry of his fathers, and plucked him as a *brand out of the fire*. He that redeemed Abraham out of his snares and troubles will redeem all that are by faith his genuine seed, out of theirs. He that began his care of his church in the redemption of Abraham, when it and its Redeemer were in his loins, will not now cast off the

care of it. Because the enemies of his people are so industrious both to blacken them, and to frighten them, therefore he will appear for the house of Jacob, and they shall not be ashamed as they have been, but shall have wherewith to answer those that reproach them, nor shall *their faces now wax pale*; but they shall gather courage, and look their enemies in the face without change of countenance, as *they have reason to do*, who have the God of Abraham on their side.

7. Jacob, who thought his family would be extinct, and the cutail of religion quite cut off, shall have the satisfaction of seeing a numerous progeny devoted to God for a generation, v. 23. (1.) He shall see his children; multitudes of believers and praying people, the spiritual seed of faithful Abraham and wrestling Jacob. Having his *quiver full of these arrows*, he *shall not be ashamed*, (v. 22.) but shall speak with his enemy in the gate, Ps. cxxvii. 5. Christ shall *not be ashamed*, (ch. i. 7.) *for he shall see his seed*; (ch. liii. 10.) he sees some, and forcsees more, in the midst of him, flocking to the church, and residing there. (2.) His children are the work of God's hands; being formed by him, they are formed for him, his *workmanship, created unto good works*. It is some comfort to parents, to think that their children are God's creatures, the *work of the hands of his providence*. But it will be much more a comfort to them, to see their children his new creatures, the *work of the hands of his grace*. (3.) He and his children shall sanctify the name of God as their God, as *the Holy One of Jacob*, and shall fear and worship the God of Israel. This is opposed to his being ashamed, and waxing pale; when he is delivered from his contempts and dangers, he shall not *magnify himself*, but *sanctify the Holy One of Jacob*. If God make our condition easy, we must endeavour to make his name glorious. Parents and children are *then ornaments and comforts indeed to each other*, when they join in *sanctifying the name of God*. When parents give up their children, and children give up themselves, to God to be *to him for a name and a praise*, then the forest will soon become a fruitful field.

## CHAP. XXX.

The prophecy of this chapter seems to relate (as that in the chapter before) to the approaching danger of Jerusalem and desolations of Judah by Sennacherib's invasion. Here is, I. A just reproof to those who, in that distress, trusted to the Egyptians for help, and were all in a hurry to fetch succours from Egypt, v. 1. 7. II. A terrible threatening against those who slighted the good advice which God by his prophets gave them for the reposing of their minds in that distress, assuring them that whatever became of others, the judgment would certainly overtake them, v. 8. 17. III. A gracious promise to those who trusted in God, that they should not only see through the trouble, but should see happy days after it, times of joy and reformation, plenty of the means of grace, and therewith plenty of outward good things, and increasing joys and triumphs; (v. 18. 26.) many of these promises are very applicable to gospel grace. IV. A prophecy of the total rout and ruin of the Assyrian army, which should be an occasion of great joy, and an introduction to those happy times, v. 27. 33.

1. **WO** to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin: 2. That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth, to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt! 3. Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in

the shadow of Egypt *your* confusion. 4. For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes. 5. They were all ashamed of a people *that* could not profit them, nor be a help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach. 6. The burden of the beasts of the south: Into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence *come* the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people *that* shall not profit *them*. 7. For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength *is* to sit still.

It was often the fault and folly of the people of the Jews, that, when they were insulted by their neighbours on one side, they sought for succour from their neighbours on the other side, instead of looking up to God, and putting their confidence in him. Against the Israelites they sought to the Syrians, 2 Chron. xvi. 2, 3. Against the Syrians they sought to the Assyrians, 2 Kings xvi. 7. Against the Assyrians they sought to the Egyptians, and Rabshakeh upbraided them with it, 2 Kings xviii. 21. Now observe here,

1. How this sin of theirs is described, and what there was in it that was provoking to God. When they saw themselves in danger and distress, (1.) They would not consult with God. They would do things of their own heads, and not advise with God, though they had a ready and certain way of doing it by Urim or prophets. They were so confident of the prudence of their own measures, that they thought it needless to consult the oracle; nay, they were not willing to put it to that issue: "They take counsel among themselves, and one from another; but they do not *ask* counsel, much less will they *take* counsel of me. *They cover with a covering*," (they think to secure themselves with one shelter or other, which may serve to cover them from the violence of the storm,) "*but not of my Spirit*;" (not such as God by his Spirit, in the mouth of his prophets, directed them to;) "and therefore it will prove too short a covering, and a refuge of lies." (2.) They could not confide in God. They did not think it enough to have God on their side, nor were they at all solicitous to make him their Friend, but they strengthened themselves in the strength of Pharaoh; they thought him a powerful ally, and doubted not but to be able to cope with the Assyrian, while they had him for them. The shadow of Egypt (and it was but a shadow) was the covering in which they wrapped themselves.

2. What was the evil of this sin; (1.) It bespoke them rebellious children; and a wo is here denounced against them under that character, v. 1. They were, in profession, God's children; but, not trusting in him, they were justly stigmatized as rebellious; for if we distrust God's providence, we do, in effect, withdraw ourselves from our allegiance. (2.) They added sin to sin. It was sin that brought them into distress; and then, instead of repenting, they *trespassed yet against the Lord*, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. And they that abused God's mercies to them, in making them the fuel of their lusts, abused their afflictions too, in making them an excuse for their distrust of God; and so they make bad worse, and add sin to sin; and they that do so, as they make their own chain heavy, so it is just with God to make their plagues wonderful. Now

that which aggravated it was, [1.] That they took so much pains to secure the Egyptians for them; *They walk*, or go down to *Egypt*, travel up and down to find an advantageous road thither; but they *have not asked at my mouth*, never considered whether God would allow and approve of it or no. [2.] That they were at such a vast expense to do it, v. 6. They load the beasts of the south (horses fetched from Egypt, which lay south from Judea,) with their riches; fancying, as it is common with a people in a fright, that they were safer any where than where they were. Or, they sent their riches thither, as bribes to Pharaoh's courtiers, to engage them in their interests, or as pay for their army. God would have helped them *gratis*; but if they will have it from the Egyptians, they must pay dearly for it, and they seem willing to do so. The riches that are so spent will turn to a bad account. They carried their effects to Egypt through a land (so it may be read) of trouble and anguish; that vast howling wilderness which lay between Canaan and Egypt, *whence come the lion and fiery serpent*, Deut. viii. 15. They would venture through that dangerous wilderness, to bring what they had to Egypt. Or, it may be meant of Egypt itself, which had been to Israel a house of bondage, and therefore a land of trouble and anguish, and which abounded in ravenous and venomous creatures. See what dangers men run into, that forsake God; and what dangers they will run into, in pursuance of their carnal confidences, and their expectations from the creature.

3. What would be the consequence of it; (1.) The Egyptians would receive their ambassadors, would speak kindly to them, and be willing to treat with them; (v. 4.) *His princes were at Zoan*, at Pharaoh's court there, and had their audience of the king, who encouraged them to depend upon his friendship, and the succours he would send them. But, (2.) They would not answer their expectation, they could not profit them, v. 5. For God says, *They shall not profit them*; (v. 6.) and every creature is that to us, (and no more,) which he makes it to be. Either, the forces they were to furnish them with, could not be raised in time; or, when they were raised, they were not fit for service, and they would not venture any of their veteran troops in the expedition; or, the march was so long, that they could not come up when they had occasion for them; or, the Egyptians would not be cordial to Israel, but would secretly incline to the Assyrians, upon some account or other; *The Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose*, v. 7. They shall hinder and hurt, instead of helping. And therefore, (3.) These people, that were now so fond of the Egyptians, would at length be ashamed of them, and of all their expectations from them, and confidence in them; (v. 3.) "*The strength of Pharaoh*, which was your pride, *shall be your shame*; all your neighbours will upbraid you, and you will upbraid yourselves, with your folly in trusting to it. And the *shadow of Egypt*, that *land shadowing with wings*, (ch. xlviii. 1.) that was your confidence, shall be your confusion; it will not only disappoint you, and be the matter of your shame, but it will weaken all your other supports, and be an occasion of mischief to you." God afterward threatens the ruin of Egypt for this very thing, because they had dealt treacherously with Israel, and been a staff of a reed to them, Ezek. xxix. 6, 7. The princes and ambassadors of Israel, that were so forward to court an alliance with them, when they came among them, shall see so much of their weakness, or rather of their baseness, that *they shall all be ashamed of a people that could not be a help or profit to them*, but a *shame and reproach*, v. 5. Those that trust in God, and

his power, providence, and promise, are never made ashamed of their hope: but they that put confidence in any creature, will, sooner or later, find it a reproach to them. God is true, and may be trusted; but every man a liar, and must be suspected. The Creator is a Rock of ages, the creature a broken reed; we cannot expect too little from man, or too much from God.

4. The use and application of all this; (v. 7.) *Therefore have I cried concerning this matter, this project of theirs.* I have published it, that all might take notice of it. I have pressed it as one in earnest. *Their strength is to sit still*, in an humble dependence upon God, and his goodness, and a quiet submission to his will; and not to vary about, and agitate themselves about obtaining help from this and the other creature. If we sit still in a day of distress, hoping and quietly waiting for the salvation of the Lord, and using only lawful, regular methods for our own preservation, this will be the strength of our souls, both for services and sufferings, and it will engage divine strength for us. We weaken ourselves, and provoke God to withdraw from us, when we make flesh our arm, for then our heart departs from the Lord. When we have tired ourselves by seeking for help from creatures, we shall find it the best way of recruiting ourselves, to repose in the Creator; *Here I am, let him do with me as he pleases.*

8. Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever; 9. That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: 10. Which say to the seers, See not: and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: 11. Get ye out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us. 12. Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: 13. Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. 14. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water *withal* out of the pit. 15. For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not. 16. But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift. 17. One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee; till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill.

Here,

1. The preface is very awful; the prophet must not only preach this, but he must *write it*, (v. 8.) write it in a table, to be hung up, and exposed to public view; he must carefully note it, not in loose papers which might be lost or torn, but in a book, to be preserved for posterity in *perfectum rei memoriam*—for a standing testimony against this wicked generation; let it remain not only to the next succeeding ages, but for ever and ever, while the world stands; and so it shall, for the book of the scriptures, no doubt, shall continue, and be read, to the end of time. Let it be written, 1. To shame the men of the present age, who would not hear and heed it when it was spoken; let it be written, that it may not be lost; their children may profit by it, though they will not. 2. To justify God in the judgments he was about to bring upon them; people will be tempted to think he was too hard upon them, and over severe, unless they know how very bad they were, how very provoking, and what fair means God tried with them before he brought it to this extremity. 3. For warning to others not to do as they did, lest they fare as they fared; it is designed for admonition to those of the remotest place and age, even *those upon whom the ends of the world are come*, 1 Cor. x. 11. It may be of use for God's ministers not only to preach, but to write; for that which is written remains.

II. The character given of the profane and wicked Jews is very sad; he must, if he will draw them in their own colours, write this concerning them, (and we are sure he does not bear false witness against them, nor make them worse than they were, for the judgment of God is according to truth,) *That this is a rebellious people*, v. 9. The Jews were, for aught we know, the only professing people God had then in the world, and yet many of them were a rebellious people. 1. They rebelled against their own convictions and covenants; for *they are lying children*, that will not stand to what they say, that promise fair, but perform nothing; when he took them into covenant with him, he said of them, *Surely they are my people, children that will not lie*; (ch. lxiii. 8.) but they proved otherwise. 2. They rebelled against the divine authority; they are *children that will not hear the law of the Lord*, nor heed it, but will do as they have a mind, let God himself say what he will to the contrary.

III. The charge drawn up against them is very high, and the sentence passed upon them very dreadful.

Two things they here stand charged with, and their doom is read for both, a fearful doom.

1. They forbade the prophets to speak to them in God's name, and to deal faithfully with them. This their sin is described, v. 10, 11. They set themselves so violently against the prophets to hinder them from preaching, or, at least, from dealing plainly with them in their preaching, did so banter them and browbeat them, that they did, in effect, *say to the seers, See not.* They had the light, but they loved darkness rather. It was their privilege, that they had seers among them, but they did what they could to put out their eyes; that they had prophets among them, but they did what they could to stop their mouths; for they tormented them in their wicked ways, Rev. xi. 10. Those that silence good ministers, and discountenance good preaching, are justly counted, and called, *rebels against God*. See what it was in the prophets' preaching, with which they found themselves aggrieved. (1.) The prophets told them of their faults, and warned them of their misery and danger by reason of sin, and they could not bear that. They must speak to them smooth things; must flatter them in their

sins, and say that they did well, and there was no harm, no peril, in the course of life they lived in. Let a thing be ever so right and true, if it be not smooth, they will not hear it. But if it be agreeable to the good opinion they have of themselves, and will confirm them in that, though it be ever so false, and ever so great a cheat upon them, they will have it prophesied to them. Those deserve to be deceived, that desire to be so. (2.) The prophets stopped them in their sinful pursuits, and stood in their way like the angel in Balaam's road, with the sword of God's wrath drawn in their hand; so that they could not proceed without terror. And this they took amiss; when they went on frowardly in the way of their hearts, they said to the prophet, "*Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the paths.* What do you do in our way? Cannot you let us alone to do as we please?" Those have their hearts fully set in them to do evil, that bid their faithful monitors to stand out of their way. *Forbear, why shouldst thou be smitten?* 2 Chron. xxv. 16. (3.) The prophets were continually telling them of the Holy One of Israel, what an Enemy he is to sin, and how severely he will reckon with sinners; and this they could not endure to hear of. Both the thing itself, and the expression of it, were too serious for them; and therefore if the prophets will speak to them, they will make it their bargain that they shall not call God *the Holy One of Israel*; for God's holiness is that attribute which wicked people most dread. Let us no more be troubled with that state-preface (as Mr. White calls it) to your impertinent harangues. Those have reason to fear perishing in their sins, that cannot bear to be frightened out of them.

Now what is the doom passed upon them for this? We have it v. 12, 13. Observe, [1.] Who it is that gives judgment upon them; *Thus saith the Holy One of Israel.* That title of God which they particularly excepted against, the prophet makes use of. Faithful ministers will not be driven from using such expressions as are proper to awaken sinners, though they be displeasing. We must tell men that God is the *Holy One of Israel*, and so they shall find him, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. [2.] What the ground of the judgment is; *because they despise this word*; either in general, every word that the prophets said to them, or, this word in particular, which speaks God *the Holy One of Israel*, they despise this, and will neither make it their fear, to stand in awe of it, nor make it their hope, to put any confidence in it; but, rather than they will be beholden to the *Holy One of Israel*; will trust in *oppression and perverseness*, in the wealth they have got, and the interests they have made, by fraud and violence, or in the sinful methods they have taken for their own security, in contradiction to God and his will. On these they stay, and therefore they justly should fall. [3.] What the judgment is, that is passed upon them; "*This iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall.*" This confidence of yours will be like a house built upon the sand, which will fall in the storm, and bury the builder in the ruins of it. Your contempt of that word of God, which you might build upon, will make every thing else you trust to, like a wall that bulges out, which, if any weight be laid upon it, comes down, nay, which often sinks with its own weight." The ruin they would hereby bring upon themselves, should be, *First*, A surprising ruin; the breaking shall come suddenly, at an instant, when they do not expect it; which will make it the more frightful; and when they are not prepared or provided for it, which will make it the more fatal. *Secondly*, An utter ruin, universal and irreparable; "You and all your confidences shall be not only weak as

the potter's clay, (*ch. xxix. 16.*) but broken to pieces as the potter's vessel. He that has the rod of iron shall break it, (Ps. ii. 9.) and he shall not spare, nor have any regard to it, nor be in care to preserve or keep whole any part of it. But when once it is broken, so as to be unfit for use, let it be dashed, let it be crushed, all to pieces, so that there may not remain one sherd big enough to take up a little fire or water"—two things we have daily need of, and which poor people commonly fetch in a piece of a broken pitcher. They shall not only be as a *bowing wall*, (Ps. lxxii. 3.) but as a broken mug or glass, which are good for nothing, nor can ever be made whole again.

2. They slighted the gracious directions God gave them, not only how to secure themselves, and make themselves safe, but how to compose themselves, and make themselves easy; they would take their own way, v. 15.—17. Observe here,

(1.) The method God put them into for salvation and strength. The God that knew them, and knew what was proper for them, and desired their welfare, gave them this prescription; and it is recommended to us all. [1.] Would we be saved from the evil of every calamity, guarded against the temptation of it, and secured from the curse of it, which are the only evil things in it? It must be in returning, and rest; in returning to God, and reposing in him as our Rest. Let us return from our evil ways, into which we have gone aside, and rest and settle in the way of God and duty, and that is the way to be saved; "Return from this project of going down to Egypt, and rest satisfied in the will of God, and then you may trust him with your safety. In returning, in the thorough reformation of your hearts and lives; and in rest, in an entire submission of your souls to God, and a complacency in him, *you shall be saved.*" [2.] Would we be strengthened to do what is required of us, and to bear what is laid upon us? It must be in quietness, and in confidence; we must keep our spirits calm and sedate by a continual dependence upon God, and his power and goodness; we must retire into ourselves with a holy quietness, suppressing all turbulent and tumultuous passions, and keeping the peace in our own minds. And we must rely upon God with a holy confidence that he can do what he will, and will do what is best for his people. And this will be our strength; it will inspire us with such a holy fortitude as will carry us with ease and courage through all the difficulties we may meet with.

(2.) The contempt they put upon this prescription; they would not take God's counsel, though it was so much for their own good. And justly will they die of their disease, that will not take God for their Physician. We are certainly enemies to ourselves, if we will not be subjects to him. They would not so much as try the method prescribed; "*But ye said, No, (v. 16.) we will not compose ourselves, for we will flee upon horses, and we will ride upon the swift; we will hurry lither and thither to fetch in foreign aids.*" They think themselves wiser than God, and that they know what is good for themselves better than he does. When Sennacherib took all the fenced cities of Judah, those rebellious children would not be persuaded to sit still, and patiently to expect God's appearing for them, as he did wonderfully at last; but they would shift for their own safety, and thereby they exposed themselves to so much the more danger.

(3.) The sentence passed upon them for this. Their sin shall be their punishment; "*You will flee, and therefore you shall flee; you will be upon the full speed, and therefore so shall those be, that pursue you.*" The dogs are most apt to run barking after him that rides fast. The conquerors protected those that sat still, but pursued those that made

their escape; and so that every project by which they hoped to save themselves, was justly their ruin, and the most guilty suffered most. It is foretold, *v.* 17. [1.] That they should be easily cut off; they should be so dispirited with their own fears, increased by their flight, that one of the enemy should defeat a thousand of them, and five put an army to flight; which could never be, *unless their Rock had sold them*, Deut. xxxii. 30. [2.] That they should be generally cut off, and only here and there one should escape, alone in a solitary place, and left for a spectacle too, *as a beacon upon the top of a mountain*; a warning to others to avoid the like sinful courses and carnal confidences.

18. And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you; for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him. 19. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee. 20. And though the LORD give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: 21. And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. 22. Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence. 23. Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures. 24. The oxen likewise, and the young asses that ear the ground, shall eat clean provender which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan. 25. And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. 26. Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

The closing words of the foregoing paragraph, (*Ye shall be left as a beacon upon a mountain*), some understand as a promise, that a remnant of them should be reserved as monuments of mercy. Here the prophet tells them what good times should succeed these calamities; or, the first words in this paragraph may be read by way of antithesis, *Notwithstanding this, yet will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious*. The prophet, having showed that those who made Egypt their confidence would

be ashamed of it, here shows that they who sat still and made God alone their Confidence, would have the comfort of it. It is matter of comfort to the people of God, when the times are very bad, that *all will be well yet*, well with them that fear God, when we say to the wicked, *It shall be ill with them*.

I. God will be gracious to them, and will have mercy on them: that is the foundation of all good. If we find favour with God, and he have mercy upon us, we shall have comfort, according to the time that we have been afflicted. 1. "He will wait to be gracious; (*v.* 18.) he will wait till you return to him and seek his face, and then he will be ready to meet you with mercy. He will wait, that he may do it in the best and fittest time, when it will be most for his glory, when it will come to you with the most pleasing surprise. He will continually follow you with his favours, and not let slip any opportunity of being gracious to you." 2. "He will stir up himself to deliver you, will be exalted, will be raised up out of his holy habitation, (*Zech.* ii. 13.) that he may appear for you in more than ordinary instances of power and goodness; and thus he will be exalted; he will glorify his own name, that is it he aims at in having mercy on his people." 3. He will be very gracious; (*v.* 19.) and this, in answer to prayer, which makes his kindness doubly kind; "He will be gracious to thee, at the voice of thy cry; the cry of thy necessity, when that is most urgent; the cry of thy prayer, when that is most fervent. When he shall hear it, there needs no more, at the first word he will answer thee, and say, *Here I am*." Herein he is very gracious indeed.

In particular, (1.) Those who were disturbed in the possession of their estates, shall again enjoy them quietly. When the danger is over, the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem, as they used to do; they shall dwell safely, free from the fear of evil. (2.) Those who were all in tears shall have cause to rejoice, and shall weep no more; and those who dwell in Zion, the holy city, will find enough there to wipe away tears from their eyes. Now this is grounded upon two great truths; [1.] That the LORD is a God of judgment; he is both wise and just in all the disposals of his providence, true to his word, and tender of his people. If he correct his children, it is with judgment; (*Jer.* x. 24.) with moderation and discretion, considering their frame. We think we may safely refer ourselves to a man of judgment; and shall we not commit our way to a God of judgment? [2.] That therefore all those are blessed, who wait for him; who not only wait on him with their prayers, but wait for him with their hopes; who will not take any indirect course to extricate themselves out of their straits, or anticipate their deliverance, but patiently expect God's appearances for them in his own way and time. Because God is infinitely wise, those are truly happy who refer themselves to him.

II. They shall not again know the want of the means of grace, *v.* 20, 21. Here, 1. It is supposed that they might be brought into straits and troubles, after this deliverance was wrought for them. It was promised (*v.* 19.) that they should weep no more, and that God would be gracious to them; and yet here it is taken for granted that God may give them the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, prisoners' fare, (*1 Kings* xxii. 27.) coarse and sorry food, such as the poor use. When one trouble is over, we know not how soon another may succeed; and we may have an interest in the favour of God, and such consolations as are sufficient to prohibit weeping, and yet may have bread of adversity given us to eat, and water of affliction to drink. Let us therefore not judge of love or hatred by what is before us. 2. It is promised that their eyes should see their teachers, that they should have faithful

teachers among them, and should have hearts to regard them, and not slight them as they had done; and then they might the better be reconciled to the bread of adversity and the water of affliction. It was a common saying among the old Puritans, *Brown bread and the gospel are good fare*. A famine of bread is not so great a judgment as a famine of the word of God, Amos viii. 11, 15. It seems that their teachers had been removed into corners, (probably, being forced to shift for their safety in the reign of Ahaz,) but it shall be so no more. *Veritas non querit angulos—Truth seeks no corners for concealment*; but the teachers of truth may sometimes be driven into corners for shelter; and it goes ill with the church when it is so; when the woman with her crown of twelve stars is forced to flee into the wilderness, (Rev. xii. 6.) when the prophets are *hid by fifty in a cave*, 1 Kings xviii. 4. But God will find a time to call the teachers out of their corners again, and to replace them in their solemn assemblies, which shall *see their own teachers*, the eyes of all the *synagogue* being fastened on them, Luke iv. 20. And it will be the more pleasing because of the restraint they have been for some time under, as light out of darkness, as life from the dead. To all that love God, and their own souls, this return of faithful teachers out of their corners, especially with a promise that they *shall not be removed into corners any more*, is the most acceptable part of any deliverance, and has comfort enough in it to sweeten even the *bread of adversity and the water of affliction*. But this is not all; it is promised that they shall have the benefit, not only of a public ministry, but of private and particular admonition and advice; (v. 21.) “*Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee*, calling after thee as a man calls after a traveller that he sees going out of his road.” Observe, (1.) Whence this word shall come: *from behind thee*, from some one whom thou dost not see, but who sees thee. “*Thine eyes see thy teachers*; but this is a teacher out of sight, it is thy own conscience, which shall now by the grace of God be awakened to do its office.” (2.) What the word shall be; “*This is the way, walk ye in it*. When thou art doubting, conscience shall direct thee to the way of duty; when thou art dull and trifling, conscience shall quicken thee in that way.” As God has not left himself without witness, so he has not left us without guides to show us our way. (3.) The seasonableness of this word; It shall come when ye *turn to the right hand, or to the left*. We are very apt to miss our way; there are turnings on both hands, and those so tracked and seemingly straight, that they may easily be mistaken for the right way; there are right hand and left hand errors, extremes on each side virtue; the tempter is busy courting us into the by-paths. It is happy then if, by the particular counsels of a faithful minister or friend, or the checks of conscience, and the strivings of God’s Spirit, we be set right, and prevented from going wrong. (4.) The success of this word; “*It shall not only be spoken, but thine ears shall hear it*; whereas God has formerly *spoken once, yea, twice, and thou hast not perceived it*, (Job xxxiii. 14.) now thou shalt listen attentively to these secret whispers, and hear them with an obedient ear.” If God give us not only the word, but the hearing ear, not only the means of grace, but a heart to make a good use of those means, we have reason to say, *He is very gracious to us*, and reason to hope he has yet further mercy in store for us.

III. They shall be cured of their idolatry, shall fall out with their idols, and never be reconciled to them again, v. 22. The deliverance God shall work for them, shall convince them that it is their interest, as well as duty, to serve him only; and they shall own that as their trouble was brought upon

them for their idolatries, so it was removed upon condition that they should not return to them. This is also the good effect of their seeing of their teachers, and hearing of the word behind them; by *this* it shall appear that they are the better for the means of grace they enjoy—they shall break off from their best-beloved sin. Observe, 1. How foolishly mad they had formerly been upon their idols, in the day of their apostasy; idolaters are said to be *mad upon their idols*, (Jer. i. 38.) dotingly fond of them; they had *graven images of silver, and molten images of gold*, and, though gold needs no painting, they had coverings and ornaments on these; they spared no cost in doing honour to their idols. 2. How wisely mad (if I may so speak) they now were at their idols, what a holy indignation they conceived against them in the day of their repentance! They not only degraded their images, but defaced them; not only defaced them, but defiled them; they not only spoiled the shape of them, but in a pious fury threw away the gold and silver they were made of, though otherwise valuable, and convertible to a good use. They could not find in their hearts to make any vessel of honour of it. The rich clothes wherewith their images were dressed up, they cast away as filthy cloth, which renders those that touch them *unclean until the even*, Lev. xv. 23. Note, To all true penitents sin is become very odious; they loathe it, and loathe themselves because of it; they cast it away to the dunghill, the fittest place for it, nay, to the cross, for they crucify the flesh; their cry against it is, *Crucify it, crucify it*. They say unto it, *Abi hinc in malam rem—Get thee hence*. They are resolved never to harbour it any more. They put as far from them as they can, all the occasions of sin, and temptations to it, though they are as a right eye or a right hand, and protest against it as Ephraim did, (Hos. xiv. 8.) *What have I to do any more with idols?* Probably, this was fulfilled in many particular persons, who, by the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib’s army, were convinced of the folly of their idolatry, and forsook it; it was fulfilled in the body of the Jewish nation at their return from their captivity in Babylon, for they abhorred idols ever after; and it is accomplished daily in the conversion of souls, by the power of divine grace, from spiritual idolatry to the fear and love of God. Those that join themselves to the Lord, must abandon every sin, and say unto it, *Get thee hence*.

IV. God will then give them plenty of all good things: when he gives them their teachers, and they give him their hearts, so that they begin to seek the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, *then all other things shall be added to them*, Matth. vi. 33. And when the people are brought to praise God, *then shall the earth yield her increase, and with it God, even our own God, shall bless us*, Ps. lxxvii. 5, 6. So it follows here; “*When ye shall have abandoned your idols, then shall God give the rain of your seed*,” v. 23. When we return to God in a way of duty, he will meet us with his favours. 1. God will give you rain of your seed, rain to water the seed you sow, just at the time that it calls for it, as much as it needs, and no more. Observe, How man’s industry and God’s blessing concur to the good things we enjoy relating to the life that now is; *Thou shalt sow the ground*, that is thy part, and then *God will give the rain of thy seed*, that is his part. It is so in spiritual fruit; we must take pains with our hearts, and then wait on God for his grace. 2. The increase of the earth shall be rich and good, and every thing the best of the kind; it shall be *fat and fat*, very fat and very good, *fat and plentiful*, so we read it; good, and enough of it. Your land shall be *fat* Canaan indeed; it was remarkably so after the defeat of Sennacherib, by the special blessing



of God, *ch. xxxvii. 30.* God would thus repair the losses they sustained by that devastation. 3. Not only the tillage, but the pasture ground, should be remarkably fruitful; *The cattle shall feed in large pastures*; those that are at grass, shall have room enough, and the oxen and asses that are kept up for use, to ear the ground, which must be the better fed for their being worked, they shall eat clean provender: the corn shall not be given them in the chaff as usual, to make it go the further, but good clean corn fit for man's use, being winnowed with the fan; the brute creatures shall share in the abundance: it is fit they should, for they groan under the burthen of the curse which man's sin has brought upon the earth. 4. Even the tops of the mountains, that used to be barren, shall be so well watered with the rain of heaven, that there shall be rivers and streams there, and running down thence to the valleys, (*v. 25.*) and this in the day of the great slaughter that should be made by the angel in the camp of the Assyrians; when the towers and batteries they had erected for the carrying on of the siege of Jerusalem, the army being slain, should fall of course. It is probable that this was fulfilled in the letter of it, and that about the same time that that army was cut off, there were extraordinary rains, in mercy to the land.

V. The effect of all this should be extraordinary comfort and joy to the people of God. (*v. 26.*) Light, that is, knowledge, shall increase; when the prophecies are accomplished, they shall be fully understood; or, rather, triumph shall the light of the joy that is sown for the righteous, shall now come up with a great increase; the *light of the moon* shall become as bright and as strong as that of the sun, and that of the sun shall increase proportionably, and be as the *light of seven days*: every one shall be much more cheerful, and appear much more pleasant, than usual. There shall be a high spring-tide of joy in Judah and Jerusalem, upon occasion of the ruin of the Assyrian army, *when the Lord binds up the breach of his people*; not only saves them from being further wounded, but heals the wounds that have been given them by this invasion, and makes up all their losses. The great distress they were reduced to, their despair of relief, and the suddenness of their deliverance, would much augment their joy. This is not unfitly applied by many to the light which the gospel brought into the world to them that sat in darkness, which as far exceeded the Old Testament light as that of the sun does that of the moon, and which proclaims *healing to the broken-hearted*, and the *binding up of their wounds*.

27. Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far, burning *with his anger*, and the burden *thereof is heavy*; his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire: 28. And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity; and *there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err*. 29. Ye shall have a song, as in the night *when a holy solemnity is kept*; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the Mighty One of Israel. 30. And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of *his anger*, and *with the flame*

of a devouring fire, *with scattering*, and tempest, and hailstones. 31. For through the voice of the LORD shall the Assyrian be beaten down, *which smote with a rod*. 32. And *in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the LORD shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps*: and in battles of shaking will he fight with it. 33. For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared: he hath made *it deep and large*; the pile thereof *is fire and much wood*: the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

This terrible prediction of the ruin of the Assyrian army, though it is a threatening to them, is part of the promise to the Israel of God; that God would not only punish the Assyrians for the mischief they had done to the Israel of God, but would disable and deter them from doing the like again; and this prediction, which would now shortly be accomplished, would ratify and confirm the foregoing promises, which should be accomplished in the latter days.

Here is,

I. God Almighty angry, and coming forth in anger against the Assyrians; he is here introduced in all the power and all the terror of his wrath, *v. 27.* The name of *Jehovah*, which the Assyrians disdain, and set at a distance from them, as if they were out of its reach, and it could do them no harm, *behold, it comes from far*; a messenger in the name of the Lord comes from as far off as heaven itself; he is a messenger of wrath, burning with his anger. God's lips are full of indignation at the blasphemy of Rabshakeh, who compared the God of Israel with the gods of the heathen; his *tongue is as a devouring fire*, for he can speak his proud enemies to ruin; his very breath comes with as much force as an overflowing stream, and with it he shall slay the wicked, *ch. xi. 4.* He does not stifle or smother his resentments, as men do theirs, when they are either causeless or impotent; but *he shall cause his glorious voice to be heard*, when he proclaims war with an enemy that sets him at defiance, *v. 30.* He shall display the indignation of his anger, anger in the highest degree; it shall be as the flame of a devouring fire, which carries and consumes all before it; with lightning or dissipation, and with tempest and hailstones, all which are the formidable phenomena of nature, and therefore expressive of the terror of the Almighty God of nature.

II. The execution done by this anger of the Lord. Men are often angry, when they can only threaten, and talk big; but when God causes his glorious voice to be heard, that shall not be all, he will show *the lighting down of his arm* too, *v. 30.* The operations of his providence shall accomplish the menaces of his word; they that *would not see the lifting up of his arm*, (*ch. xxvi. 11.*) shall feel the lighting down of it, and find, to their cost, that the burthen thereof is heavy, (*v. 27.*) so heavy, that they cannot bear it, nor bear up against it, but must unavoidably sink and be crushed under it. *Who knows the power of his anger*, or imagines what an offended God can do?

Five things are here prepared for the execution:

1. Here is an *overflowing stream*, that shall reach to the midst of the neck, shall quite overwhelm the whole body of the army; and Sennacherib only, the head of it, shall keep above water and escape this stroke, while yet he is reserved for another in the house of Nisroch his god. The Assyrian army had been to Judah as an overflowing stream, reaching

even to the neck, (*ch. viii. 7, 8.*) and now the breath of God's wrath will be so to it.

2. Here is a *sieve of vanity*, with which God would sift those nations of which the Assyrian army was composed, *v. 28.* The great God can sift nations, for they are all before him as the small dust of the balance; he will sift them, not to gather out of them any that should be preserved, but so as to shake them one against another, put them into consternation, and shake them all away at last; for it is a sieve of vanity (which retains nothing) that they are shaken with, and they are found all chaff.

3. Here is a *bridle*, which God has in their jaws, to curb and restrain them from doing the mischief they would do, and to force and constrain them to serve his purposes against their own will, *ch. x. 7.* God particularly says of Sennacherib, (*ch. xxxvii. 29.*) that he will put a hook in his nose, and a bridle in his lips; it is a *bridle causing them to err*, forcing them to such methods as will certainly be destructive to themselves and their interest, and in which they will be infatuated. God with a word guides his people into the right way, (*v. 21.*) but with a bridle he turns his enemies headlong upon their own ruin.

4. Here is a *rod*, and a *staff*, even the voice of the Lord, his word giving orders concerning it, with which the Assyrian shall be beaten down, *v. 31.* The Assyrian had been himself a rod, in God's hand, for the chastising of his people, and had smitten them—(*ch. x. 5.*) that was a transient rod; but against the Assyrian shall go forth a *grounded staff*, that shall give a steady blow, shall stick close to him, and strike home, so as to leave an impression upon him; it is a staff with a foundation, founded upon the enemies' deserts, and God's determinate counsel; it is a consumption determined: (*ch. x. 23.*) and therefore there is no escaping it, no getting out of the reach of it, it shall pass in every place where an Assyrian is found, and the Lord shall *lay it upon him*, and *cause it to rest*, *v. 32.* Such is the woful case of those that persist in enmity to God: *the wrath of God abides on them.*

5. Here is *Tophet* ordained and prepared for them, *v. 33.* The valley of the son of Hinnom, adjoining to Jerusalem, was called *Tophet*; in that valley it is supposed many of the Assyrian regiments lay encamped, and were there slain by the destroying angel; or there the bodies of those that were so slain, were burned. Hezekiah had *lately, and from yesterday*, (so the word is,) ordained it; that is, say some, he had rid it of the images that were set up in it, to which they there burnt their children, and so prepared it to be a receptacle for the dead bodies of their enemies; for the king of Assyria, for his army, it is prepared, and there is fuel enough ready to burn them all; and they shall be consumed as suddenly and effectually as if the fire were kept burning by a continual stream of brimstone, for such the breath of the Lord, his word and his wrath, will be to it. Now as the prophet, in the foregoing promises, slides insensibly into the promises of gospel-graces and comforts, so here, in the threatening of the ruin of Sennacherib's army, he points at the final and everlasting destruction of all impenitent sinners. Our Saviour calls the future misery of the damned, *Gehenna*, in allusion to the valley of Hinnom, which gives some countenance to the applying of this to that misery, as also that in the Apocalypse, that is so often called *the lake that burns with fire and brimstone*. This is said to be prepared of old for the devil and his angels, for the greatest of sinners, the proudest, and that think themselves not accountable to any for what they say and do; even for kings it is prepared. It is deep and large, sufficient to receive the world of the ungodly; *the fuel thereof is fire and much*

*wood*. God's wrath is the fire, and sinners make themselves fuel to it; and the breath of the Lord (the power of his anger) kindles it, and will keep it ever burning. See *ch. lxi. 24.* Wherefore *stand in awe and sin not*.

III. The great joy which this should occasion to the people of God: the Assyrian's fall is Jerusalem's triumph; (*v. 29.*) *Ye shall have a song as in the night*, a psalm of praise, such as they sing, who *by night stand in the house of the Lord*, and sing to his glory *who gives songs in the night*. It shall not be a song of vain mirth, but a sacred song, such as was sung when a holy solemnity was kept in a grave and religious manner. Our joy in the fall of the church's enemies must be a holy joy, *gladness of heart, as when one goes, with a pipe*, (such as the sons of the prophets used when they prophesied, *1 Sam. x. 4.*) *to the mountain of the Lord*, there to celebrate the praises of the *Mighty One of Israel*. Nay, in every place where the divine vengeance shall pursue the Assyrians, they shall not only fall unlamented, but all their neighbours shall attend their fall with tabrets and harps, pleased to see how God, in battles of shaking, such as shake them out of the world, fights with them; (*v. 32.*) for *when the wicked perish, there is shouting*; and it is with a particular satisfaction that wise and good men see the ruin of those who, like the Assyrians, have insolently bid defiance to God, and trampled upon all mankind.

## CHAP. XXXI.

This chapter is an abridgment of the foregoing chapter; the heads of it are much the same. Here is, I. A wo to those who, when the Assyrian army invaded them, trusted to the Egyptians, and not to God for succour, *v. 1. . 3.* II. Assurance given of the care God would take of Jerusalem in that time of danger and distress, *v. 4, 5.* III. A call to repentance and reformation, *v. 6, 7.* IV. A prediction of the fall of the Assyrian army, and the fright which the Assyrian king should thereby be put into, *v. 8, 9.*

1. **WO** to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because *they are many* and in horsemen, because they are very strong: but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord! 2. Yet he also *is wise*, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words: but will arise against the house of the evil-doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity. 3. Now the Egyptians *are men*, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together. 4. For thus hath the Lord spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, *he will not be afraid of their voice*, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof. 5. As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it, and passing over he will preserve it.

This is the last of four chapters together, that begin with wo; and they are all woes to the sinners

that were found among the professing people of God; to the *drunkards of Ephraim*, (ch. xxviii. 1.) to *Ariel*, (ch. xxix. 1.) to the *rebellious children*, (ch. xxx. 1.) and here, to them *that go down to Egypt for help*; for men's relation to the church will not secure them from divine woes, if they live in contempt of divine laws. Observe,

I. What the sin was, that is here reproved, v. 1. 1. Idolizing the Egyptians, and making court to them, as if happy were the people that had the Egyptians for their friends and allies. They *go down to Egypt for help* in every exigence; as if the worshippers of false gods had a better interest in heaven, and were more likely to have success on earth, than the servants of the living and true God. That which invites them to Egypt, is, that the Egyptians have many chariots to accommodate them with, and horses and horsemen that were strong; and if they could get a good body of forces from thence into their service, they would think themselves able to deal with the king of Assyria and his numerous army. Their kings were forbidden to multiply horses and chariots, and were told of the folly of trusting to them; (Ps. xx. 7.) but they think themselves wiser than their Bible. 2. Slighting the God of Israel; They *look not to the Holy One of Israel*; they treat him as if he were not worth taking notice of in this distress; they advise not with him, seek not his favour, nor are in any care to make him their Friend.

II. The gross absurdity and folly of this sin.

1. They neglected one whom, if they would not hope in him, they had reason to fear. They do not seek the Lord, nor make their application to him, *yet he also is wise*, v. 2. They are solicitous to get the Egyptians into an alliance with them, because they have the reputation of a politic people; and is not God wise too? And would not infinite wisdom, engaged on their side, stand them in more stead than all the policies of Egypt? They are at the pains of going down to Egypt, a tedious journey, when they might have had better advice, and better help, by looking up to heaven, and would not. But if they will not court God's wisdom to act *for* them, they shall find it act *against* them; he is wise, too wise for them to outwit, and he will bring evil upon those who thus affront him; he will not call back his words as men do, (because they are fickle and foolish,) but *he will rise against the house of the evil-doers*, this cabal of them that go down to Egypt; God will appear to their confusion, according to the word that he has spoken, and will oppose the help they think to bring in from the workers of iniquity. Some think the Egyptians made it one condition of their coming into an alliance with them, that they should worship the gods of Egypt, and they consented to it, and therefore they are both called *evil-doers* and *workers of iniquity*.

2. They trusted to those who were unable to help them, and would soon appear to be so, v. 3. Let them know that the Egyptians, whom they depend so much upon, are men, and not God. As it is good for men to *know themselves to be but men*, (Ps. ix. 20.) so it is good for us to consider that those we love and trust to are but men. They therefore can do nothing without God, nothing against him, nothing in comparison with him. They are men, and therefore fickle and foolish, mutable and mortal, here to-day, and gone to-morrow; they are men, and therefore let us not make gods of them, by making them our hope and confidence, and expecting that in them which is to be found in God only; they are not God, they cannot do that for us which God can do, and will, if we trust in him. Let us not then neglect him, to seek to them; let us not forsake the Rock of ages for broken reeds, nor the Fountain of living waters for broken cisterns. The

Egyptians indeed have horses that are very strong; but they are flesh, and not spirit, and therefore, strong as they are, they may be wearied with a long march, and become unserviceable, or wounded and slain in battle, and leave their riders to be ridden over. Every one knows this, that the Egyptians are not God, and their horses are not spirit; but they that seek to them for help do not consider it, else they would not put such confidence in them. Sinners may be convicted of folly by the plainest and most self-evident truths, which they cannot deny, but will not believe.

3. They would certainly be ruined with the Egyptians they trusted in, v. 3. When the Lord does but stretch out his hand, how easily, how effectually, will he make them ashamed of their confidence in Egypt, and the Egyptians ashamed of the encouragement they gave them to trust in them: for he that helps, and he that is helped, shall fall together, and their mutual alliance shall prove their joint ruin. The Egyptians were shortly to be reckoned with, as appears by the *burthen of Egypt*, (ch. xix.) and then those who fled to them for shelter and succour should fall with them, for there is no escaping the judgments of God; *evil pursues sinners*, and it is just with God to make that creature a scourge to us, which we make an idol of.

4. They took God's work out of his hands; they pretended a great deal of care to preserve Jerusalem, in advising to an alliance with Egypt; and when others would not fall in with their measures, they pleaded self-preservation, and went to Egypt themselves. Now the prophet here tells them that Jerusalem should be preserved without aid from Egypt, and that those who tarried there should be safe, when those who fled to Egypt should be ruined. Jerusalem was under God's protection, and therefore there was no occasion to put it under the protection of Egypt: but a practical distrust of God's all-sufficiency is at the bottom of all our sinful departures from him to the creature.

The prophet tells them he had it from God's own mouth, *Thus hath the Lord spoken to me*, we may depend upon it;

(1.) That God would appear against Jerusalem's enemies with the boldness of a *lion over his prey*, v.

4. When the lion comes out to seize his prey, a multitude of shepherds come out against him; (for it becomes neighbours to help one another, when persons or goods are in danger;) these shepherds dare not come near the lion; all they can do is, to make a noise, and with that they think to fright him off. But does he regard it? No, *he will not be afraid of their voice*, nor abase himself so far as to be in the least moved by it, either to quit his prey, or to make any more haste than otherwise he would do in seizing it. *Thus will the Lord of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion*, with such an unshaken, undaunted resolution, not to be moved by any opposition; and he will as easily and irresistibly destroy the Assyrian army as a lion tears a lamb in pieces. Whoever appear against God, they are but like a multitude of poor simple shepherds shouting at a lion, who scorns to take notice of them, or so much as to alter his pace for them. Surely they that have such a Protector need not go to Egypt for help.

(2.) That God would appear for Jerusalem's friends with the *tenderness of a bird over her young*, v. 5. God was ready to *gather Jerusalem, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings*; (Matth. xxiii. 37.) but they that trusted to the Egyptians would not. As birds flying to their nests with all possible speed, when they see them attacked, and fluttering about their nests with all possible concern, hovering over their young ones to protect them, and drive away the assailants, with such compassion and affection *will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem*.

As an eagle stirs up her young when they are in danger, *takes them and bears them on her wings*, so the Lord led Israel out of Egypt: (Dent. xxxii. 11, 12.) and he has now the same tender concern for them that he had then, so that they need not flee into Egypt again for shelter. *Defending, he will deliver it*; he will so defend it as to secure the continuance of its safety; not defend it for awhile, and abandon it at last, but defend it so that it shall not fall into the enemy's hand; *I will defend this city to save it*, ch. xxxvii. 35. *Passing over, he will preserve it*; the word for passing over is used in that sense only here and Exod. xii. 12, 23, 27. concerning the destroying angel's passing over the houses of the Israelites, when he slew all the first-born of the Egyptians, to which story this refers here; the Assyrian army was to be routed by a destroying angel, who should pass over Jerusalem, though that deserved to be destroyed, and draw his sword only against the besiegers. They shall be slain by the pestilence, but none of the besieged shall take the infection. Thus he will again pass over the houses of his people, and secure them.

6. Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. 7. For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin. 8. Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; and the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him: but he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited. 9. And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.

This explains the foregoing promise of the deliverance of Jerusalem; she shall be fitted for deliverance, and then it shall be wrought for her; for in that method God delivers.

1. Jerusalem shall be reformed, and so she shall be delivered from her enemies *within her walls*, v. 6, 7. Here is, (1.) A gracious call to repentance. This was the Lord's voice crying in the city, the voice of the rod, the voice of the sword, and the voice of the prophets interpreting the judgment; "*Turn ye, O turn ye now, from your evil ways, unto God, return to your allegiance to him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted, from whom you, O children of Israel, have revolted.*" He reminds them of their birth and parentage, that they were *children of Israel*, and therefore under the highest obligations imaginable to the God of Israel, as an aggravation of their revolt from him, and as an encouragement to them to return to him. They have been backsliding children, yet children; therefore let them return, and their backslidings shall be healed: they have deeply revolted, with great address, as they supposed, the revolters are profound; (Hos. v. 2.) but it will prove that they have revolted dangerously; the stain of their sins is gone deep into their nature, not to be easily got out, like the blackness of the Ethiopian; *They have deeply corrupted themselves*, (Hos. ix. 9.) they have sunk deep into misery, and cannot easily recover themselves; therefore you have need to hasten your return to God. (2.) A gracious promise of the good success of this call; (v. 7.) *In that day every man shall cast away his idols*, in obedience to Hezekiah's orders, which, till they were alarmed by the Assyrian invasion, many refused to do. That is a happy

fright which frightens us from our sins. It shall be a general reformation; every man shall cast away his own idols; shall begin with them, before he undertakes to demolish other people's idols, which there will be no need of, when every man reforms himself. It shall be a thorough reformation: for they shall part with their idolatry, their beloved sin, with their idols of silver and gold, their idols that they are most fond of. Many make an idol of their silver and gold, and by the love of that are drawn to revolt from God; but those that turn to God cast that away out of their hearts, and will be ready to part with it when God calls. It shall be a reformation upon a right principle, a principle of piety, not of politics, they shall cast away their idols, because they have been unto them for a sin, an occasion of sin; therefore they will have nothing to do with them, though they had been the work of their own hands, and upon that account they had a particular fondness for them. Sin is the work of our own hands, but in working it we have been working our own ruin, and therefore we must cast it away; and those are strangely wedded to it, who will not be prevailed with to cast it away, when they see that otherwise they themselves will be cast away. Some make this to be only a prediction that those who trust in idols, when they find they stand them in no stead, will cast them away in indignation. But it agrees so exactly with ch. xxx. 22. that I rather take it as a promise of a sincere reformation.

2. Jerusalem's besiegers shall be routed, and so she shall be delivered from the enemies about her walls: the former makes way for this. If a people return to God, they may leave it to him to plead their cause against their enemies. Then, when they have cast away their idols, *then shall the Assyrian fall*, v. 8, 9. (1.) The army of the Assyrians shall be laid dead upon the spot by the sword, not of a mighty man, nor of a mean man, nor of any man at all, either Israelite or Egyptian, not forcibly by the sword of a mighty man, not surreptitiously by the sword of a mean man, but by the sword of an angel, who strikes more strongly than a mighty man, and yet more secretly than a mean man; by the sword of the Lord, and his power and wrath in the hand of the angel: thus the young men of the army shall melt, and be discomfited, and become tributaries to death. When God has work to do against the enemies of his church, we expect it must be done by mighty men and mean men, officers and common soldiers; whereas God can, if he pleases, do it without either. *He needs not armies of men*, who has legions of angels at command, Matth. xxvi. 53. (2.) The king of Assyria shall flee for the same, shall flee from that invisible sword, hoping to get out of the reach of it; and he shall make the best of his way to his own dominions, shall pass over to some strong hold of his own, for fear lest the Jews should pursue him, now that his army was routed. Sennacherib had been very confident that he should make himself master of Jerusalem, and in the most insolent manner had set both God and Hezekiah at defiance; yet now he is made to tremble for fear of both. God can strike a terror into the proudest of men, and make the stoutest heart to tremble. See Job xviii. 11.—xx. 24. His princes that accompany him shall be afraid of the ensign, shall be in a continual fright at the remembrance of the ensign in the air, which perhaps the destroying angel displayed before he gave the fatal blow. Or, they shall be afraid of every ensign they see, suspecting it is a party of the Jews pursuing them. The banner that God displays for the encouragement of his people, (Ps. lx. 4.) will be a terror to his and their enemies. Thus he cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth. But who will

do this? It is the Lord, *whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem*; [1.] Whose residence is there, and who there keeps house, as a man does where his fire and his oven are; it is the city of the great King, and let not the Assyrians think to turn him out of the possession of his own house. [2.] Who is there a consuming Fire to all his enemies, and will make them as a fiery oven in the day of his wrath, Ps. xxi. 9. He is himself *a Wall of fire round about Jerusalem*, so that whoever assaults her, does it at his peril, Zech. ii. 5. Rev. xi. 5. [3.] Who has his altar there, on which the holy fire is continually kept burning, and sacrifices daily offered to his honour, and with which he is well-pleased; and therefore he will defend this city, especially having an eye to the great Sacrifice which was there also to be offered, of which all the sacrifices were types. If we keep up the fire of holy love and devotion in our hearts and houses, we may depend upon God to be a Protection to us and them.

### CHAP. XXXII.

This chapter seems to be such a prophecy of the reign of Hezekiah, as amounts to an abridgment of the history of it, and this with an eye to the kingdom of the Messiah, whose government was typified by the thrones of the house of David; for which reason he is so often called *the Son of David*. Here is, I. A prophecy of that good work of reformation with which he should begin his reign, and the happy influence it should have upon the people, who had been wretchedly corrupted and debauched in the reign of his predecessor, v. 1.-8. II. A prophecy of the great disturbance that would be given to the kingdom in the middle of his reign by the Assyrian invasion, v. 9.-14. III. A promise of better times afterward, toward the latter end of his reign, in respect both of piety and peace, (v. 15.-20.) which promise may be supposed to look as far forward as the days of the Messiah.

1. **BEHOLD**, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. 2. And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. 3. And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim; and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. 4. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly. 5. The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said *to be bountiful*. 6. For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the Lord, to make empty the soul of the hungry; and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. 7. The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right. 8. But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.

We have here the description of a flourishing kingdom; "*Blessed art thou, O land, when it is thus with thee, when kings, princes, and people, are, in their places, such as they should be.*" It may be taken as a directory both to magistrates and subjects, what both ought to do; or as a panegyric to Hezekiah, who ruled well, and saw something of

the happy effects of his good government: and it was designed to make the people sensible how happy they were under his administration, and how careful they should be to improve the advantages of it, and withal to direct them to look for the kingdom of Christ, and the times of reformation which that kingdom should introduce.

It is here promised, and prescribed, for the comfort of the church:

I. That magistrates should do their duty in their places, and the powers answer the great ends for which they were ordained of God, v. 1, 2. 1. There shall be a king and princes that shall reign and rule; for it cannot go well when there is no king in Israel. The princes must have a king, a monarch over them as supreme, in whom they may unite; and the king must have princes under him as officers, by whom he may act, 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. They both shall know their place, and fill it up; the king shall reign, and yet, without any diminution to his just prerogative, the princes shall rule in a lower sphere, and all for the public good. 2. They shall use their power according to law, and not against it; they shall reign in righteousness and in judgment, with wisdom and equity, protecting the good, and punishing the bad: and those kings and princes Christ owns as reigning by him, who decree justice; (Prov. viii. 15.) such a King, such a Prince, Christ himself is; he reigns by rule, and in righteousness will he judge the world, *ch. ix. 7-11. iv. 3.* Thus they shall be great blessings to the people, v. 2. A man, that man, that king that reigns in righteousness, *shall be as a hiding-place*. When princes are as they should be, people are as they would be. (1.) They are sheltered and protected from many mischiefs; this good magistrate is a covert to the subject from the tempest of injury and violence; he *defends the poor and fatherless*, that they be not made a prey of by the mighty. Whither should oppressed innocency flee, when blasted by reproach, or borne down by violence, but to the magistrate as its hiding-place? To him it appeals, and by him it is righted. (2.) They are refreshed and comforted with many blessings; this good magistrate gives such countenance to those that are poor, and in distress, and such encouragement to every thing that is praiseworthy, that he is as rivers of water in a dry place, cooling and cherishing the earth, and making it fruitful; and as the shadow of a great rock, under which a poor traveller may shelter himself from the scorching heat of the sun in a weary land. It is a great reviving to a good man, who makes conscience of doing his duty, in the midst of contempt and contradiction, at length to be backed, and favoured, and smiled upon, in it by a good magistrate. All this, and much more, the Man Christ Jesus is to all the willing, faithful, subjects of his kingdom. When the greatest evils befall us, not only the wind, but the tempest, when storms of guilt and wrath beset us, and beat upon us, they drive us to Christ, and in him we are not only safe, but satisfied that we are so; in him we find rivers of water for them that hunger and thirst after righteousness, all the refreshment and comfort that a needy soul can desire, and the shadow, not of a tree, which sun or rain may beat through, but of a rock, of a great rock, which reaches a great way for the shelter of the traveller. Some observe here, that as the covert, and the hiding-place, and the rock, do themselves receive the battering of the wind and storm, to save those from them that take shelter in them, so Christ bore the storm himself, to keep it off from us.

II. That subjects shall do their duty in their places.

1. They shall be willing to be taught, and to understand things aright; they shall lay aside their

prejudices against their rulers and teachers, and submit to the light and power of truth, *v. 3.* When this blessed work of reformation is set on foot, and men do their parts towards it, God will not be wanting to do his: then the eyes of them that see, of the prophets, the seers, shall not be dim; but God will bless them with visions, to be by them communicated to the people; and those that read the word written, shall no longer have a vail upon their hearts, but shall see things clearly; then the ears of them that hear the word preached, shall hearken diligently, and readily receive what they hear; and not be so dull of hearing as they have been. This shall be done by the grace of God, especially gospel-grace; *for the hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord has made*, has new-made, even both of them.

2. There shall be a wonderful change wrought in them by that which is taught them, *v. 4.* (1.) They shall have a clear head, and be able to discern things that differ, and distinguish concerning them. The heart of those that were hasty and rash, and could not take time to digest and consider things, shall now be cured of their precipitation, and shall understand knowledge, for the Spirit of God will open their understanding; this blessed work Christ wrought in his disciples after his resurrection, (Luke xxiv. 45.) as a specimen of what he would do for all his, in giving them an understanding, 1 John v. 20. The pious designs of good princes are then likely to take effect, when their subjects allow themselves liberty to consider, and to think, so freely as to take things right. (2.) They shall have a ready utterance; the tongue of the stammerers, that used to blunder whenever they spake of the things of God, shall now be ready to speak plainly, as those that understand what they speak of, that believe, and therefore speak. There shall be a great increase of such clear, distinct, and methodical knowledge in the things of God, that those from whom one would not have expected it, shall speak intelligently of those things, very much to the honour of God, and the edification of others. Their hearts being full of this good matter, their tongues shall be as the pen of a ready writer, Ps. xlv. 1.

3. The differences between good and evil, virtue and vice, shall be kept up, and no more confounded by those who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; (*v. 5.*) *The vile shall no more be called liberal;* (1.) Bad men shall no more be preferred by the prince. When a king reigns in justice, he will not put those in places of honour and power that are ill-natured, and of base and sordid spirits, and care not what injury or mischief they do, so they may but compass their own ends. Such are *vile* persons; (as Antiochus is called, Dan. xi. 21.) when they are advanced, they are called *liberal* and *bountiful*, they are called *benefactors*, (Luke xxii. 25.) but it shall not always be thus; when the world grows wiser, men shall be preferred according to their merit; and honour (which was never thought seemly for a fool, Prov. xxvi. 1.) shall no longer be thrown away upon such. (2.) Bad men shall be no more had in reputation among the people, nor vice disguised with the colours of virtue. It shall no more be said to Nabal, *Thou art Nadib*; (so the words are;) such a covetous muckworm as Nabal was, a fool but for his money, shall not be complimented with the title of a gentleman, or a prince; nor shall they call a churl, that minds none but himself, does no good with what he has, but is an unprofitable burthen of the earth, *My lord*; or, rather, they shall not say of him, *He is rich*; for so the word signifies: those only are to be reckoned rich, that are rich in good works; not those that have abundance, but those that use it well. In short, it is well with a people, when men are generally valued by their virtue, and usefulness, and beneficence to main-

kind, and not by their wealth, or titles of honour. Whether this was fulfilled in the reign of Hezekiah, and how far it refers to the kingdom of Christ, (in which we are sure men are judged of by what they are, not by what they have, nor is any man's character mistaken,) we will not say; but it prescribes an excellent rule both to prince and people, to respect men according to their personal merit.

To enforce this rule, here is a description both of the vile person and of the liberal; and by it we shall see such a vast difference between them, that we must quite forget ourselves if we pay that respect to the vile person and the churl, which is due only to the liberal.

[1.] A vile person and a churl will do mischief, and the more if he be preferred, and have power in his hand; his honours will make him worse and not better, *v. 6, 7.* See the character of these base ill-conditioned men. *First*, They are always plotting some unjust thing or other, designing ill either to particular persons, or to the public, and contriving how to bring it about; and so many silly piques they have to gratify, and mean revenges, that there appears not in them the least spark of generosity; their hearts will be still working some iniquity or other. Observe, There is the work of the heart, as well as the work of the hands: as thoughts are words to God, so designs are works in his account. See what pains sinners take in sin; they labour at it, their hearts are intent upon it, and with a great deal of art and application they work iniquity. They devise wicked devices with all the subtlety of the old serpent, and a great deal of deliberation, which makes the sin exceeding sinful; for the more there is of plot and management in a sin, the more there is of Satan in it. *Secondly*, They carry on their plots by trick and dissimulation; when they are meditating iniquity; they practise hypocrisy, feign themselves just men, Luke xx. 20. The most abominable mischiefs shall be disguised with the most plausible pretences of devotion to God, regard to man, and concern for some common good. These are the vilest of men, that intend the worst mischiefs when they speak fair. *Thirdly*, They speak villany. When they are in a passion, you will see what they are by the base ill language they give to those about them, which no way becomes men of rank and honour; or, in giving verdict or judgment, they villainously put false colours upon things, to pervert justice. *Fourthly*, They affront God, who is a righteous God, and loves righteousness: they *utter error against the Lord*, and therein they practise profaneness; for so the word signifies, which we translate *hypocrisy*. They give an unjust sentence, and then profanely make use of the name of God for the ratification of it; as if, because the *judgment is God's*, (Deut. i. 17.) therefore their false and unjust judgment was his; this is *uttering error against the Lord*, under pretence of uttering truth and justice for him: and nothing can be more impudently done against God, than to patronize wickedness with his name. *Fifthly*, They abuse mankind, those particularly whom they are bound to protect and relieve. 1. Instead of supplying the wants of the poor, they impoverish them, they *make empty the souls of the hungry*; either taking away the food they have, or, which is almost equivalent, denying the supply which they want, and which they have to give. And they *cause the drink of the thirsty to fail*; they cut off the relief they used to have, though they need it as much as ever. Those are vile persons indeed, that rob the spital. 2. Instead of righting the poor, when they appeal to their judgment, they contrive to destroy the poor, to ruin them in their courts of judicature with lying words in favour of the rich, to whom they are plainly partial: yea, though the needy speak right, though the evidence



be ever so full for them to make out the equity of their cause, it is the bribe that governs them, not the right. *Lastly*, These churls and vile persons have always bad instruments about them, that are ready to serve their villanous purposes; *All their servants are wicked*; there is no design so palpably unjust, but there may be found those that would be employed as tools to put it in execution. *The instruments of the churl are evil*, and one cannot expect otherwise; but this is our comfort, that they can do no more mischief than God permits them.

[2.] One that is truly liberal, and deserves the honour of being called so, makes it his business to do good to every body, according as his sphere is, *v. 8.* Observe, *First*, The care he takes, and the contrivances he has, to do good. He devises liberal things; as much as the churl or niggard projects how to save and lay up what he has for himself only, so much the good charitable man projects how to use and lay out what he has in the best manner for the good of others. Charity must be directed by wisdom, and liberal things done prudently and with device, that the good intention of them may be answered, that it may not be charity misplaced. The liberal man, when he has done all the liberal things that are in his power, devises liberal things for others to do according to their power, and puts them upon doing them. *Secondly*, The comfort he takes, and the advantage he has, in doing good; by liberal things he shall stand, or be established. The providence of God will reward him for his liberality with a settled prosperity and an established reputation. The grace of God will give him abundance of satisfaction and confirmed peace in his own bosom; what disquiets others shall not disturb him; his heart is fixed. This is the recompense of charity, *Ps. cxli. 5, 6.* Some read it, *The prince, or honourable man, will take honourable courses; and by such honourable or ingenuous courses he shall stand, or be established.* It is well with a land, when the honourable of it are indeed men of honour, and scorn to do a base thing; when its king is thus the son of nobles.

9. Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech. 10. Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women: for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come. 11. Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones: strip ye, and make ye bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins. 12. They shall lament for the teats, for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. 13. Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers, yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city: 14. Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; 15. Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. 16. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. 17. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. 18. And my

people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places, 19. When it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place. 20. Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.

In these verses we have God rising up to judgment against vile persons, to punish them for their villany; but, at length, returning in mercy to the liberal, to reward them for their liberality.

I. When there was so great a corruption of manners, and so much provocation given to the holy God, bad times might well be expected, and here is a warning given of such times coming. The alarm is sounded to the *women that were at ease*, (*v. 9.*) and the careless daughters, to feed whose pride, vanity, and luxury, their husbands and fathers were tempted to starve the poor. Let them hear what the prophet has to say to them in God's name; "*Rise up, and hear with reverence and attention.*"

1. Let them know that God was about to bring wasting, desolating judgments upon the land in which they *lived in pleasure, and were wanton*. This seems to refer primarily to the desolations made by Sennacherib's army, when he seized all the fenced cities of Judah: but when those words, *many days and years*, must be rendered, as the margin reads them, *days above a year*, something above a year shall this havoc be in making; so long it was from the first entrance of that army into the land of Judah, to the overthrow of it. But it is applicable to the wretched disappointment which they will certainly meet with, first or last, that set their hearts upon the world, and place their happiness in it; *Ye shall be troubled, ye careless women*. It will not secure us from trouble to cast away care when we are at ease; nay, to those who affect to live carelessly, even little trouble will be great vexations, and press hard upon them. They were careless and at ease, because they had money enough and mirth enough. But the prophet here tells them, (1.) That the country whence they had their rents and dainties, should shortly be laid waste; the vintage should fail; "And then what will ye do for wine to make merry with? The gathering of fruit shall not come, for there shall none be gathered, and you will find the want of them, *v. 10.* You will want the teats, the good milk from the cows, the pleasant fields and their productions; the useful fields that are serviceable to human life, are the pleasant ones; you will want the fruitful vine, and the grapes it used to yield you." The abuse of plenty is justly punished with scarcity; and they deserve to be deprived of the supports of life, who made them the food and fuel of lust, and prepared them for Baal. (2.) That the cities too, the cities of Judah, where they lived at ease, spent their rents and made themselves merry with their dainties, should be laid waste too; (*v. 13, 14.*) *Briers and thorns*, the fruits of sin and the curse, shall come up; not only *upon the land of my people*, which shall lie uncultivated, but *upon all the houses of joy*; the play-houses, the gaming-houses, the taverns in the joyous cities. When a foreign army was ravaging the country, the houses of joy, no doubt, became houses of mourning; then the palaces, or noblemen's houses, were forsaken by their owners, who perhaps fled to Egypt for refuge; the multitude of the city were left by their leaders to shift for themselves. Then the stately houses shall be for dens for ever, which had been as forts and towers for strength and magnificence; they shall be abandoned, the owners shall never return to them, every body shall look upon them to be like Jericho, an anathema; so that even when peace re-

turns, they shall not be rebuilt, but shall be thrown into the waste; *a joy of wild asses, and a pasture of flocks.* Thus is many a house brought to ruin by sin; *Jam seges est ubi Troja fuit—Corn grows on the site of Troy.*

2. In the foresight of this, let them *tremble, and be troubled, strip them, and gird sackcloth upon their loins*, v. 11. This intimates not only that when the calamity comes, they shall thus be made to tremble, and be forced to strip themselves, that then God's judgments would strip them, and make them bare; but, (1.) That the best prevention of the trouble would be to repent and humble themselves for their sin, and lie in the dust before God in true remorse and godly sorrow, which would be the lengthening out of their tranquillity. This is meeting God in the way of his judgments, and saving a correction by correcting our own mistakes; those only shall break that will not bend. (2.) That the best preparation for the trouble would be to deny themselves, and live a life of mortification, and to sit loose to all the delights of sense. Those that have already by a holy contempt of this world stripped themselves, can easily bear to be stripped, when trouble and death come.

II. While there was still a remnant that kept their integrity, they had reason to hope for good times at length, and such times the prophet here gives them a pleasant prospect of. Such times they saw in the latter end of the reign of Hezekiah; but the prophecy may well be supposed to look further, to the days of the Messiah, who is *King of righteousness and King of peace*, and to whom all the prophets bear witness. Now observe,

1. How those blessed times shall be introduced; by the *pouring out of the Spirit from on high*, (v. 15.) which speaks not only of the good-will of God towards us, but the good work of God in us; first then, and not till then, there will be good times, when God by his grace gives men good hearts; and therefore God's *giving his holy Spirit to them that ask him*, is, in effect, his giving them all good things, as appears by comparing Luke xi. 13. with Matthew vii. 11. This is the great thing that God's people comfort themselves with the hopes of, that *the Spirit shall be poured out upon them*, that there shall be a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace than formerly, according as the necessity of the church, in its desolate estate, calls for. This comes from on high, and therefore they look up to their Father in heaven for it. When God designs favours for his church, he pours out his Spirit, both to prepare his people to receive his favours, and to qualify those whom he designs to employ as instruments of his favour, and give them success; for their endeavours to repair the desolations of the church are all fruitless, *until the Spirit be poured out upon them*, and then the work is done suddenly. The kingdom of the Messiah was brought in, and set up, by the pouring out of the Spirit, (Acts ii.) and so it is still kept up, and will be to the end.

2. What a wonderfully happy change shall then be made. That which was a wilderness, dry and barren, shall become a fruitful field, and that which we now reckon a fruitful field, in comparison with what it shall be then, shall be counted for a forest; *Then shall the earth yield her increase.* It is promised, that in the days of the Messiah *the fruit of the earth shall shake like Lebanon*. Ps. lxxii. 16. Some apply this to the admission of the Gentiles into the gospel-church, which made the wilderness a fruitful field; and the rejection and exclusion of the Jews, which made that a forest, which had been a fruitful field. On the Gentiles was poured out a spirit of life, but on the Jews a spirit of slumber. See what is the evidence and effect of the pouring out of the Spirit upon any soul; it is thereby made

fruitful, and has its fruit unto holiness. Three things go to make these times happy.

(1.) Judgment and righteousness, v. 16. When the Spirit is poured out upon a land, *then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness*, and turn it into a fruitful field; and *righteousness shall remain in the fruitful field*, and make it yet more fruitful. Ministers shall expound the law, and magistrates execute it; and both so judiciously and faithfully, that by both the bad shall be made good, and the good made better; among all sorts of people, the poor and low, and unlearned, that are neglected as the wilderness, and the rich and great, and learned, that are valued as the fruitful field, there shall be right thoughts of things, good principles commanding, and conscience made of good and evil, sin and duty. Or, in all parts of the land, both champaign and enclosed, country and city, the ruder parts and those that are more cultivated and refined, justice shall be duly administered. The law of Christ introduces a judgment or rule by which we must be governed, and the gospel of Christ a righteousness by which we must be saved; and wherever the Spirit is poured out, both these dwell and remain as an everlasting righteousness.

(2.) Peace and quietness, v. 17, 18. This is of two kinds:

[1.] *Inward peace*, v. 17. This follows upon the indwelling of righteousness, v. 16. Those in whom that work is wrought shall experience this blessed product of it. It is itself peace, and the effect of it *quietness and assurance for ever*, a holy serenity and security of mind, by which the soul enjoys itself and its God, and it is not in the power of this world to disturb it in those enjoyments. Note, Peace and quietness, and everlasting assurance may be expected, and shall be found, in the way and work of righteousness. True satisfaction is to be had only in true religion, and there it is to be had without fail. Those are the quiet and peaceable lives, that are spent in *all godliness and honesty*, 1 Tim. ii. 2. *First, Even the work of righteousness shall be peace*; in the doing of our duty we shall find abundance of true pleasure, a present great reward of obedience in obedience. Though the work of righteousness may be toilsome and costly, and expose us to contempt, yet it is peace, such peace as is sufficient to bear our charges. *Secondly, The effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance*, not only to the end of time, of our time, and in the end, but to the endless ages of eternity. Real holiness is real happiness, now, and shall be perfect happiness, that is, perfect holiness, for ever.

[2.] *Outward peace*, v. 18. It is a great mercy when those who by the grace of God have quiet and peaceable spirits, are by the providence of God made to dwell in quiet and peaceable habitations, not disturbed in their houses or solemn assemblies. When the terror of Sennacherib's invasion was over, the people, no doubt, were more sensible than ever of the mercy of a quiet habitation; not disturbed with the alarms of war. Let every family study to keep itself quiet from strifes and jars within; not two against three, and three against two, in the house; and then put itself under God's protection to dwell safely, and to be *quiet from the fear of evil* without. Jerusalem shall be a peaceable habitation; compare ch. xxxiii. 20. Even when it shall hail, and there shall be a violent battering storm coming down on the forest that lies bleak, then shall Jerusalem be a quiet resting-place, for the city shall be low in a low place; under the wind, not exposed (as those cities are that stand high) to the fury of the storm, but sheltered by the *mountains that are round about Jerusalem*, Ps. cxxv. 2. *The high forts and towers are brought down*; (v. 14.) but the city that lies low shall be 2

quiet resting-place. Those are most safe, and may dwell most at ease, that are humble, and are willing to dwell low, *v.* 19. Those that would dwell in a peaceable habitation must be willing to dwell low, and in a low place. Some think here is an allusion to the preservation of the land of Goshen from the plague of hail, which made great destruction in the land of Egypt.

(3.) Plenty and abundance. There shall be such good crops gathered in every where, and every year, that the husbandmen shall be commended and thought happy, who *sow beside all waters*, (*v.* 20.) who sow all the grounds that are fit for seedness, who *cast their bread*, or bread-corn, *upon the waters*, Eccl. xi. 1. God will give the increase, but then the husbandman must be industrious, and mind his business, and sow beside all waters; which if he do, the corn shall come up so thick and rank, that he shall turn in his cattle, even the ox and the ass, to eat the tops of it, and keep it under. This is applicable, [1.] To the preaching of the word. Some think it points at the ministry of the apostles, who, as husbandmen, went forth to sow their seed; (Matth. xiii. 3.) and they sowed beside all waters, they preached the gospel wherever they came. Waters signify people, and they preached to multitudes. Wherever they found men's hearts softened, and moistened, and disposed to receive the word, they cast in the good seed. And whereas, by the law of Moses, the Jews were forbidden to *plough with an ox and an ass*, (Deut. xxii. 10.) which intimates that Jews and Gentiles should not intermix, now that distinction shall be taken away, and both the ox and the ass, both Jews and Gentiles, shall be employed in, and enjoy the benefit of, the gospel-husbandry. [2.] To works of charity; when God sends these happy times, blessed are they that improve them in doing good with what they have, that sow beside all waters, that embrace all opportunities of relieving the necessitous; for in due season they shall reap.

### CHAP. XXXIII.

This chapter relates to the same events with that foregoing: the distress of Judah and Jerusalem by Sennacherib's invasion, and their deliverance out of that distress by the destruction of the Assyrian army. These are intermixed in the prophecy, in the way of a pindaric. Observe, I. The great distress that Judah and Jerusalem shall then be brought into, *v.* 7.-9. II. The particular frights which the sinners in Zion should then be in, *v.* 13, 14. III. The prayers of good people to God in this distress, *v.* 2. IV. The holy security which they should enjoy in the midst of this trouble, *v.* 15, 16. V. The destruction of the army of the Assyrians, (*v.* 1, 3.) in which God would be greatly glorified, *v.* 5, 10.-12. VI. The enriching of the Jews with the spoil of the Assyrian camp, *v.* 4, 23, 24. VII. The happy settlement of Jerusalem, and the Jewish state, upon this. Religion shall be uppermost, (*v.* 6.) and their civil state shall flourish, *v.* 17.-22. This was soon fulfilled, but is written for our learning.

1. **W**O to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee. 2. O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble. 3. At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered. 4. And your spoil

shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them. 5. The LORD is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. 6. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure. 7. Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without; the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly. 8. The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man. 9. The earth mourneth and languisheth; Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down; Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits. 10. Now will I rise, saith the LORD; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself. 11. Ye shall conceive chaff; ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath as fire shall devour you. 12. And the people shall be as the burnings of lime; as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

Here we have,

1. The proud and false Assyrian justly reckoned with for all his fraud and violence, and laid under a wo, *v.* 1. Observe, 1. The sin which the enemy had been guilty of; he had spoiled the people of God, and made a prey of them, and herein had broken his treaty of peace with them, and dealt treacherously. Truth and mercy are two such sacred things, and have so much of God in them, that those cannot but be under the wrath of God, that make conscience of neither, but are perfectly lost to both, that care not what mischief they do, what spoil they make, what dissimulations they are guilty of, nor what solemn engagements they violate, to compass their own wicked designs. Bloody and deceitful men are the worst of men. 2. The aggravation of this sin; he spoiled those that had never done him any injury, and that he had no pretence to quarrel with; and dealt treacherously with those that had always dealt faithfully with him. Note, The less provocation we have from men to do a wrong thing, the more provocation we give to God by it. 3. The punishment he should fall under, for this sin. He that spoiled the cities of Judah shall have his own army destroyed by an angel, and his camp plundered by those whom he had made a prey of. The Chaldeans shall deal treacherously with the Assyrians, and revolt from them. Two of Sennacherib's own sons shall deal treacherously with him, and basely murder him at his devotions. Note, The righteous God often pays sinners in their own coin. *He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity*, Rev. xiii. 10.—xviii. 6. 4. The time when he shall be thus dealt with; when he shall make an end to spoil, and to deal treacherously; not by repentance and reformation, that might prevent his ruin, (Dan. iv. 27.) but when he shall have done his worst, when he shall have gone as far as God would permit him to go, to the utmost of his tether, then the cup of trembling shall be put into his hand. When he shall have arrived at his full stature in impiety, shall have filled up the measure of his iniquity, then all shall be called over again; when he has done, God will begin, for his day is coming.

II. The praying people of God earnest at the throne of grace for mercy for the land now in its distress; (v. 2.) "*O Lord, be merciful to us; men are cruel, be thou gracious; we have deserved thy wrath, but we entreat thy favour; and if we may find thee propitious to us, we are happy; the trouble we are in cannot hurt us, shall not ruin us. It is in vain to expect relief from creatures, we have no confidence in the Egyptians; but we have waited for thee only, resolving to submit to thee, whatever the issue of the trouble be, and hoping that it shall be a comfortable issue.*" Those that by faith humbly wait for God, shall certainly find him gracious to them. They pray, 1. For those that were employed in military services for them; "*Be thou their arm every morning.*" Hezekiah, and his princes, and all the men of war, need continual supplies of strength and courage from thee; supply their need, therefore, and be to them a God all-sufficient. Every morning, when they go forth upon the business of the day, and perhaps have new work to do, and new difficulties to encounter, let them be afresh animated and invigorated, and *as the day, so let the strength be.*" In our spiritual warfare, our own hands are not sufficient for us, nor can we bring any thing to pass unless God not only strengthen our arms, (Gen. xlix. 24.) but be himself our Arm; so entirely do we depend upon him as our Arm every morning, so constantly do we depend upon his power, as well as his compassions, which are new every morning, Lam. iii. 23. If God leaves us to ourselves any morning, we are undone; we must therefore every morning commit ourselves to him, and go forth in his strength to do the work of the day in its day. 2. For the body of the people; "*Be thou our salvation also in the time of trouble; ours who sit still, and do not venture into the high places of the field.*" They depend upon God not only as their Saviour, to work deliverance for them, but as their Salvation itself; for whatever becomes of their secular interests, they will reckon themselves safe and saved, if they have him for their God. If he undertake to be their Saviour, he will be their Salvation; for *as for God, his work is perfect.* Some read it thus; "*Thou who wast their Arm every morning, who wast the continual Strength and Help of our fathers before us; be thou our Salvation also in time of trouble; help as thou helpedst them; they looked unto thee, and were lightened;* (Ps. xxxiv. 5.) let us then not walk in darkness."

III. The Assyrian army ruined, and their camp made a rich but cheap and easy prey to Judah and Jerusalem. No sooner is the prayer made, (v. 2.) than it is answered, (v. 3.) nay, it is outdone. They prayed that God would save them from their enemies; but he does more than that; he gives them victory over their enemies, and abundant cause to triumph; for, 1. The strength of the Assyrian camp is broken, (v. 3.) when the destroying angel slew so many thousands of them; *At the noise of the tumult, or the shrieks of the dying men, who, we may suppose, did not die silently, the rest of the people fled, and shifted every one for his own safety.* When God did thus lift up himself, the several nations, or clans, of which the army was composed, were scattered. It was time to stir, when such an unprecedented plague broke out among them. When God arises, his enemies are scattered, Ps. lxxviii. 1. 2. The spoil of the Assyrian camp is seized, by way of reprisal, for all the desolations of the defended cities of Judah; (v. 4.) *Your spoil shall be gathered up by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, like the gathering of the caterpillar, and as the running to and fro of locusts; the spoilers shall as easily, and as quickly, make themselves masters of the riches of the Assyrians, as a host of caterpillars, or locusts, make a*

field, or a tree, bare. Thus the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, and Israel enriched with the spoil of the Egyptians. Some make the Assyrians to be the caterpillars and locusts, which, when they are killed, are gathered together in heaps, as the frogs of Egypt, and are run upon, and trodden to dirt.

IV. God and his Israel glorified and exalted hereby. When the spoil of the enemy is thus gathered, 1. God will have the praise of it; (v. 5.) *The Lord is exalted;* it is his honour thus to abase proud men, and hide them in the dust, together; thus he magnifies his own name, and his people give him the glory of it, as Israel when the Egyptians were drowned, Exod. xv. 1, 2, &c. He is exalted as one that dwells on high, out of the reach of their blasphemies, and that has an overruling power over them, and, wherein they deal proudly, delights to show himself above them; that does what he will, and they cannot resist him. 2. His people will have the blessing of it. When God lifts up himself to scatter the nations that are in confederacy against Jerusalem, (v. 3.) then, as a preparative for that, or, as the fruit and product of it, *he has filled Zion with judgment and righteousness;* not only with a sense of justice, but with a zeal for it, and a universal care that it be duly administered. It shall again be called, *The city of righteousness, ch. i. 26.* In this the grace of God is exalted, as much as his providence was in the destruction of the Assyrian army. We may conclude God has mercy in store for a people, when he fills them with judgment and righteousness, when all sorts of people, and all their actions and affairs, are governed by them, and they are so full of them, that no other consideration can crowd in to sway them against these. Hezekiah and his people are encouraged (v. 6.) with an assurance that God would stand by them in their distress. Here is, (1.) A gracious promise of God for them to stay themselves upon—*Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation.* Here is a desirable end proposed, and that is, *the stability of our times;* that things be not disturbed and unhinged at home, and the *strength of salvation,* deliverance from, and success against, enemies abroad. The salvation that God ordains for his people has strength in it; it is a horn of salvation. And here are the way and means for obtaining this end—*wisdom and knowledge;* not only piety but prudence. That is it, which, by the blessing of God, will be the *stability of our times, and the strength of salvation.* That wisdom which is first pure, then peaceable, and which sacrifices private interests to a public good; such prudence as this will establish truth and peace, and fortify the bulwarks, in defence of them. (2.) A pious maxim of state for Hezekiah and his people to govern themselves by—*The fear of the Lord is his treasure.* It is God's treasure in the world, from which he receives his tribute; or, rather, it is the prince's treasure. A good prince accounts it so, that wisdom is better than gold; and he shall find it so. Note, True religion is the true treasure of any prince or people; it denominates them rich. These places that have plenty of Bibles and ministers, and serious good people, are really rich; and it contributes to that which makes a nation rich in this world; it is therefore the interest of a people to support religion among them, and to take heed of every thing that threatens to hinder it.

V. The great distress that Jerusalem was brought into, described; that they who believed the prophet might know beforehand what troubles were coming, and might provide accordingly; and that when the foregoing promise of their deliverance should have its accomplishment, the remembrance of the ex-

enemy of their case might help to magnify God in it, and make them the more thankful, v. 7—9. It is here foretold, 1. That the enemy would be very insolent and abusive, and there would be no dealing with him; either by treaties of peace, *for he has broken the covenant*, and never hesitated at it, as if it were below him to be a servant to his word; or, by the preparations of war, *for he has despised the cities*; he scorns to take notice either of their appeals to justice, or of their petitions for mercy. He makes himself master of them so easily, (though they are called *fenced cities*;) and meets with so little resistance, that he despises them; and has no relentings, when he puts all to the sword, for he regards no man; has no pity or concern, no not for those that he is under particular obligations to. He neither fears God, nor regards man; but is haughty and imperious to every one. There are those that take a pride in trampling upon all mankind, and have neither veneration for the honourable, nor compassion for the miserable. 2. That therefore he would not be brought to any terms of reconciliation; *The valiant ones of Jerusalem*, being unable to make their parts good with him, must be contentedly run down with noise and insolence, which will make them cry without, because they cannot serve their country, as they might have done, against a fair adversary. The ambassadors sent by Hezekiah to treat of peace, finding him so haughty and unmanageable, shall weep bitterly for vexation at the disappointment they had met with in their negotiations; they shall weep like children, as despairing to find out any expedient to pacify him. 3. That the country should be made quite desolate for a time by his army. (1.) No man durst travel the roads; so that a stop was put to trade and commerce, and (which was worse) no man could safely go up to Jerusalem, to keep the solemn feasts; *The highways lie waste*. While the fields lie waste, trodden like the highways, the highways lie waste, untrodden like the fields, for the traveller ceases. (2.) No man had any profit from the grounds, v. 9. The earth used to rejoice in its own productions for the service of God's Israel, but now the enemies of Israel eat them up, or tread them down; it mourns and languishes; the country looks melancholy, and the country people have misery in their countenances, wanting necessary food for themselves and their families; the wonted joy of harvest is turned into lamentation, so withering and uncertain are all worldly joys. The desolation is universal. That part of the country which belonged to the ten tribes, was already laid waste; Lebanon famed for cedars, Sharon for roses, Bashan for cattle, Carmel for corn, all very fruitful, are now become like wildernesses, are ashamed to be called by their old names, they are so unlike what they were. They shake off their fruits, before their time, into the hand of the spoiler, which used to be gathered seasonably by the hand of the owner.

VI. God appearing, at length, in his glory against this proud invader, v. 10—12. When things are brought thus to the last extremity, 1. God will magnify himself. He had seemed to sit by as an unconcerned Spectator; "*But now will I arise, saith the Lord*; now will I appear and act, and therein I will be not only evidenced, but exalted." He will not only demonstrate that there is a God that judges in the earth, but that he is God over all, and higher than the highest. *Now will I lift up myself*, will prepare for action, will act vigorously, and will be glorified in it. God's time to appear for his people, is, when their affairs are reduced to the lowest ebb; *when their strength is gone, and there is none shut up or left*, Deut. xxxii. 36. When all other helpers fail, then is God's time to help. 2. He will bring down the Assyrian; "*You, O Assyrians, are big*

with hopes that you shall have all the wealth of Jerusalem for your own, and are in pain till it be so; but all your hopes shall come to nothing. You shall conceive chaff, and bring forth stubble, which are not only worthless and good for nothing, but combustible and proper fuel for the fire, which they cannot escape, when your own breath, as fire, shall devour you. The breath of God's wrath, provoked against you by the breath of your sins; your malignant breath, the threatenings and slaughter you breathe out against the people of God, this shall devour you, and your blasphemous breath against God and his name. God would make their own tongues to fall upon them, and their own breath to blow the fire that should consume them. And then no wonder that the people are, as the burnings of lime in a lime-kiln, all on fire together; and as thorns cut up, which are dried and withered, and therefore easily take fire, and are soon burnt up. Such was the destruction of the Assyrian army; it was like the burning up of thorns which can well be spared, or the burning of lime, which makes it good for something. The burning of that army enlightened the world with the knowledge of God's power, and made his name shine bright.

13. Hear, ye *that are far off*, what I have done; and ye *that are near*, acknowledge my might. 14. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? 15. He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; 16. He shall dwell on high: his place of defence *shall be* the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him, his waters *shall be* sure. 17. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off. 18. Thy heart shall meditate terror. Where *is* the scribe? where *is* the receiver? where *is* he that counted the towers? 19. Thou shalt not see a fierce people; a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, *that thou canst not understand*. 20. Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle *that shall not be taken down*; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. 21. But there the glorious LORD *will be* unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. 22. For the LORD *is* our judge, the LORD *is* our lawgiver, the LORD *is* our king; he will save us. 23. The tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast; they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided: the lame take the prey. 24. And the inhabit-

ants shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein *shall be forgiven their iniquity*.

Here is a preface that commands attention; and it is fit that all should attend, both near and far off, to what God says and does; (v. 13.) *Hear, ye that are far off*, whether in place or time. Let distant regions and future ages hear what God has done. They do so; they will do so from the scripture, with as much assurance as those that were near; the neighbouring nations, and those that lived then. But whoever hears what God has done, whether near or afar off, let them acknowledge his might, that it is irresistible, and that he can do every thing. Those are very stupid who hear what God has done, and yet will not acknowledge his might.

Now what is it that God has done, which we must take notice of, and in which we must acknowledge his might?

I. He has struck a terror upon the sinners in Zion; (v. 14.) *Fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites*. There are sinners in Zion, hypocrites, that enjoy Zion's privileges, and concur in Zion's services, but their hearts are not right in the sight of God: they keep up secret haunts of sin under the cloak of a visible profession, which convicts them of hypocrisy. Sinners in Zion will have a great deal to answer for, above other sinners; and their place in Zion will be so far from being their security, that it will aggravate both their sin and punishment. Now those sinners in Zion, though always subject to secret frights and terrors, were struck with a more than ordinary consternation, from the convictions of their own consciences. 1. When they saw the Assyrian army besieging Jerusalem, and ready to set fire to it, and lay it in ashes, and burn the wasps in the nest, finding they could not make their escape to Egypt, as some had done, and distrusting the promises God had made by his prophets, that he would deliver them, they were at their wits' end, and ran about like men distracted, crying, "*Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire?*" Let us therefore abandon the city, and shift for ourselves elsewhere; one had as good live in everlasting burnings as live here." *Who will stand up for us against this devouring fire?* So some read it. See here how the sinners in Zion are affected when the judgments of God are abroad; while they were only threatened, they slighted them, and made nothing of them; but when they come to be executed, they run into the other extreme, then they magnify them, and make the worst of them; they call them *devouring fire* and *everlasting burnings*, and despair of relief and succour. Those that rebel against the commands of the word, cannot take the comforts of it in a time of need. Or, rather, 2. When they saw the Assyrian army destroyed; for the destruction of that is the fire spoken of immediately before, v. 11, 12. When the sinners in Zion saw what dreadful execution the wrath of God made, they were in a great fright, being conscious to themselves that they had provoked this God by their secret worshipping of other gods; and therefore they cry out, *Who among us shall dwell with this devouring fire*, before which so vast an army is as thorns? *Who among us shall dwell with these everlasting burnings*, which have made the *Assyrians as the burnings of lime?* v. 12. Thus they said, or should have said. Note, God's judgments upon the enemies of Zion should strike a terror upon the sinners in Zion, nay, David himself trembles at them, Ps. cxix. 120. God himself is this devouring Fire, Heb. xii. 22. *Who is able to stand before him?* 1 Sam. vi. 20. His wrath will burn those everlastingly that have made themselves fuel for it: it is a

fire that shall never be quenched, nor will ever go out of itself; for it is the wrath of an everlasting God preying upon the conscience of an immortal soul. Nor can the most daring sinners bear up against it, so as to bear either the execution of it, or the fearful expectation of it. Let this awaken us all to fly from the wrath to come, by flying to Christ as our Refuge.

II. He has graciously provided for the security of his people that trust in him; *Hear this, and acknowledge his power in making these that walk righteously, and speak uprightly, to dwell on high*, v. 15, 16. We have here,

1. The good man's character, which he preserves even in times of common iniquity; in divers instances. (1.) He walks righteously; in the whole course of his conversation he acts by rules of equity, and makes conscience of rendering to all their due; to God his due, as well as to men theirs. His walk is righteousness itself; he would not for a world willfully do an unjust thing. (2.) He speaks uprightly; *uprightness*, so the word is; he speaks what is true and right, and with an honest intention. He cannot think one thing, and speak another; nor look one way, and row another. His word is to him as sacred as his oath, and is not yea and nay. (3.) He is so far from coveting ill-gotten gain, that he despises it; he thinks it a mean and sordid thing, and unbecoming a man of honour, to enrich himself by any hardship put upon his neighbour. He scorns to do a wrong thing, nay, to do a severe thing, though he might get by it. He does not overvalue gain itself, and therefore easily abhors the gain that is not honestly come by. (4.) If he have a bribe at any time thrust into his hand, to pervert justice, he shakes his hands from holding it, with the utmost detestation, taking it as an affront to have it offered him. (5.) He stops his ears from hearing any thing that tends to cruelty or bloodshed, or any suggestions stirring him up to revenge, Job xxxi. 31. He turns a deaf ear to those that delight in war, and entice him to *cast in his lot among them*, Prov. i. 14, 16. (6.) He *shuts his eyes from seeing of evil*. He has such an abhorrence of sin, that he cannot bear to see others commit it, and does himself watch against all the occasions of it. Those that would preserve the purity of their souls, must keep a strict guard upon the senses of their bodies, must stop their ears to temptations, and turn away their eyes from beholding vanity.

2. The good man's comfort, which he may preserve even in times of common calamity, v. 16. (1.) He shall be safe; he shall escape the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings; he shall have access to, and communion with, that God who is a Devouring Fire, but shall be to him a Rejoicing Light. And as to present troubles, *he shall dwell on high*, out of the reach of them, nay, out of the hearing of the noise of them: he shall not be really harmed by them, nay, he shall not be greatly frightened at them; *The floods of great waters shall not come nigh him*; or, if they should attack him, *his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks*, strong and impregnable, fortified by nature as well as art. The divine power will keep him safe, and his faith in that power will keep him easy. God, the Rock of ages, will be his high Tower. (2.) He shall be supplied; he shall want nothing that is necessary for him; *Bread shall be given him*, even when the siege is straitest, and provisions are cut off; and *his waters shall be sure*, he shall be sure of the continuance of them, so that he shall not drink his water by measure, and with astonishment. They that fear the Lord shall not want any thing that is good for them.

III. He will protect Jerusalem, and deliver it out of the hands of the invaders. This storm, that



threatened them, should blow over, and they should enjoy a prosperous state again. Many instances are here given of this:

1. Ezekiah shall put off his sackcloth, and all the sadness of his countenance, and shall appear publicly in his beauty, in his royal robes, and with a pleasing aspect, (v. 17.) to the great joy of all his loving subjects. Those that walk uprightly shall not only have bread given them, and their water sure, but they shall with an eye of faith see the King of kings in his beauty, the beauty of holiness, and that beauty shall be upon them.

2. The siege being raised, by which they were kept close within the walls of Jerusalem, they shall now be at liberty to go abroad upon business or pleasure, without danger of falling into the enemy's hand; and they shall *behold the land that is very far off*, they shall visit the utmost corners of the nation, and take a prospect of the adjacent countries, which will be the more pleasant after so long a confinement. Thus believers behold the heavenly Canaan, that land that is very far off, and comfort themselves with the prospect of it in evil times.

3. The remembrance of the fright they were in shall add to the pleasure of their deliverance; (v. 18.) *Thine heart shall meditate terror*, meditate it with pleasure when it is over. Thou shalt think thou still hearest the alarm in thine ears, when all the cry was, "Arm, arm, arm; every man to his post. Where is the scribe, or secretary of war? Let him appear, to draw up the muster-roll. Where is the receiver, and paymaster of the army? Let him see what he has in bank, to defray the charge of a defence. Where is he that counted the towers? Let him bring in the account of them, that care may be taken to put a competent number of men in each." Or, these words may be taken as Jerusalem's triumph over the vanquished army of the Assyrians, and the rather, because the apostle alludes to them in his triumphs over the learning of this world, when it was baffled by the gospel of Christ, 1 Cor. i. 20. The virgin, the daughter of Zion, despises all their military preparations. Where is the scribe, or muster-master of the Assyrian army? Where is their weigher, (or treasurer,) and where their engineers that counted the towers? They are all either dead or fled. There is an end of them.

4. They shall no more be terrified with the sight of the Assyrians, who were a fierce people naturally, and were particularly fierce against the people of the Jews, and were of a strange language, that could understand neither their petitions nor their complaints, and therefore had a pretence for being deaf to them, nor could themselves be understood; "They are of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive, which will make them the more formidable, v. 19. Thine eyes shall no more see them thus fierce, but their countenances changed when they are all become dead corpses."

5. They shall no more be under apprehensions of the danger of Jerusalem, Zion, and the temple there; (v. 20.) "*Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities*, the city where our solemn sacred feasts are kept, where we used to meet to worship God in religious assemblies." The good people among them, in the time of their distress, were most in pain for Zion, upon this account, that it was the city of their solemnities, that the conquerors would burn their temple, and they should not have that to keep their solemn feasts in any more. In times of public danger our concern should be most about our religion, and the cities of our solemnities should be dearer to us than either our strong cities or our store-cities. It is with an eye to this, that God will work deliverance for Jerusalem, because it is the city of religious solemnities: let those be conscientiously

kept up, as the glory of a people, and we may depend upon God to create a defence upon that glory. Two things are here promised to Jerusalem; (1.) A well-grounded security. It shall be a quiet habitation for the people of God; they shall not be molested and disturbed, as they have been, by the alarms of the sword either of war or persecution, ch. xxix. 20. It shall be a quiet habitation, as it is the city of our solemnities. It is desirable to be quiet in our own houses, but much more so to be quiet in God's house, and have none to make us afraid there. Thus it shall be with Jerusalem; and *thine eyes shall see it*, which will be a great satisfaction to a good man; (Ps. cxxviii. 5, 6.) "*Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem, and peace upon Israel*; thou shalt live to see it, and share in it." (2.) An unmoved stability; Jerusalem, the city of our solemnities, is indeed but a tabernacle, in comparison with the New Jerusalem; the present manifestations of the divine glory and grace are nothing in comparison with those that are reserved for the future state; but it is such a tabernacle as shall not be taken down. After this trouble is over, Jerusalem shall long enjoy a confirmed peace; and her sacred privileges, which are the stakes and cords of her tabernacle, shall not be removed from her, nor any disturbance given to the course and circle of her religious services. God's church on earth is a tabernacle, which, though it may be shifted from one place to another, shall not be taken down while the world stands; for in every age Christ will have a seed to serve him; the promises of the covenant are its stakes, which shall never be removed, and the ordinances and institutions of the gospel are its cords, which shall never be broken. They are things which cannot be shaken, though heaven and earth be, but shall remain.

6. God himself will be their Protector and Saviour, v. 21, 22. This is the principal ground of their confidence; "He that is himself the glorious Lord, will display his glory for us, and be a Glory to us; such as shall eclipse the rival glory of the enemy." God, in being a *gracious* Lord, is a *glorious* Lord; for his goodness is his glory. God will be the Saviour of Jerusalem, and her glorious Lord. (1.) As a Guard against their adversaries abroad. He will be a Place of broad rivers and streams. Jerusalem had no considerable river running by it, as most great cities have, nothing but the brook Kidron, and so wanted one of the best natural fortifications, as well as one of the greatest advantages for trade and commerce, and upon this account their enemies despised them, and doubted not but to make an easy prey of them; but the presence and power of God are sufficient at any time to make up to us the deficiencies of the creature, and of its strength and beauty. We have all in God, all we need, or can desire. Many external advantages Jerusalem has not, which other places have, but in God there is more than an equivalent. But if there be broad rivers and streams about Jerusalem, may not these yield an easy access to the fleet of an invader? No; these are rivers and streams in which go no galley with ours, no man of war, or gallant ship. If God himself be the River, it must needs be inaccessible to the enemy, they can neither find nor force their way by it. (2.) As a Guide to their affairs at home; "*For the Lord is our Judge*, to whom we are accountable, to whose judgment we refer ourselves, by whose judgment we abide, and who therefore, (we hope,) will judge for us; *he is our Lawgiver*, his word is a law to us, and to him every thought within us is brought into obedience; *he is our King*, to whom we pay homage and tribute, and an inviolable allegiance, and therefore he will save us." For as protection draws allegiance, so allegiance may expect protection, and

shall have it with God. By faith we take Christ for our Prince and Saviour, and, as such, depend upon him, and devote ourselves to him. Observe with what an air of triumph, and with what an emphasis laid upon the glorious name of God, they comfort themselves with this; *Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Lawgiver, Jehovah is our King, who, being self-existent, is self-sufficient, and all-sufficient to us.*

7. The enemies shall be quite infatuated, and all their powers and projects broken, like a ship at sea in stress of weather, that cannot ride out the storm, but, having her tackle torn, her masts split, and nothing wherewithal to repair them, is given up for a wreck, v. 23. The tacklings of the Assyrians are loosed; they are like a ship whose tacklings are loosed, or forsaken by the ship's crew, when they give it over for lost, finding that they cannot strengthen the mast, but it will come down; they thought themselves sure of Jerusalem, but when they were just entering the port, as it were, and thought all was their own, they were quite becalmed, and could not spread their sail, but lay wind-bound till God poured the fury of his wrath upon them. The enemies of God's church are often disarmed and unrigged then when they think they have almost gained their point.

8. The wealth of their camp shall be a rich booty for the Jews; *Then is the prey of a great spoil divided.* When the greater part were slain, the rest fled in confusion, and with such precipitation, that (like the Syrians) they *left their tents as they were*, so that all the treasure in them fell into the hands of the besieged, and even *the lame take the prey*, they that tarried at home did divide the spoil. It was so easy to come at, that not only the strong man might make himself master of it, but even the lame man, whose hands were lame, that he could not fight, and his feet, that he could not pursue; as the victory shall cost them no peril, so the prey shall cost them no toil. And there was such abundance of it, that when those who were forward, and came first, had carried off as much as they would, even the lame, who came late, found sufficient. Thus God brought good out of evil, and not only delivered Jerusalem, but enriched it, and abundantly recompensed the losses they had sustained. Thus comfortably and well do the frights and distresses of the people of God often end.

9. Both sickness and sin shall be taken away; and *then* sickness is taken away in mercy, when this is all the fruit of it, and the recovery from it, even the taking away of sin.

(1.) *The inhabitants shall not say, I am sick; as the lame shall take the prey*, so shall the sick, notwithstanding their weakness, make a shift to get to the abandoned camp, and seize something for themselves; or, there shall be such a universal transport of joy upon this occasion, that even the sick shall, for the present, forget their sickness and the sorrows of it, and join with the public in its rejoicings; the deliverance of their city shall be their cure. Or, it intimates, that, whereas infectious diseases are commonly the effect of long sieges, it shall not be so with Jerusalem, but the inhabitants of it, with their victory and peace shall have health also, and there shall be no complaining upon the account of sickness within their gates; or, those that are sick shall bear their sickness without complaining, as long as they see it goes well with Jerusalem. Our sense of private grievances should be drowned in our thanksgivings for public mercies.

(2.) *The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity*; not only the body of the nation forgiven their national guilt in the removing of the national judgment, but particular persons that dwell therein shall repent, and reform, and have

their sins pardoned. And this is promised as that which is at the bottom of all other favours; he will do so and so for them, *for he will be merciful to their unrighteousness*, Heb. viii. 12. Sin is the sickness of the soul; when God pardons the sin, he heals the disease; and when the diseases of sin are healed by pardoning mercy, the sting of bodily sickness is taken out, and the cause of it removed; so that either the inhabitants shall not be sick, or, at least shall not say, *I am sick*. If iniquity be taken away, we have little reason to complain of outward affliction. *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.*

## CHAP. XXXIV.

In this chapter, we have the fatal doom of all the nations that are enemies to God's church and people, though Edom only is mentioned, because of the old enmity of Esau to Jacob, which was typical, as much as that more ancient enmity of Cain to Abel, and flowed from the original enmity of the serpent to the seed of the woman. It is probable that this prophecy had its accomplishment in the great desolations made by the Assyrian army first, or, rather, by Nebuchadnezzar's army some time after, among those nations that were neighbours to Israel, and had been some way or other injurious to them. That mighty conqueror took a pride in shedding blood, and laying countries waste, and therein, quite beyond his design, he was fulfilling what God here threatened against him and his people's enemies: but we have reason to think it is intended as a denunciation of the wrath of God against all those who fight against the interests of his kingdom among men, that it has its frequent accomplishment in the havoc made by the wars of the nations and other desolating judgments, and will have its full accomplishment in the final dissolution of all things at the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. Here is, I. A demand of universal attention, v. 1. II. A direful scene of blood and confusion presented, v. 7. III. The reason given for these judgments, v. 8. IV. The continuance of this desolation, the country being made like the lake of Sodom, (v. 9, 10.) and the cities abandoned to wild beasts and melancholy fowls, v. 11..15. V. The solemn ratification of all this, v. 16, 17. Let us hear, and fear.

1. **C**OME near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people; let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. 2. For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. 3. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. 4. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their hosts shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree. 5. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. 6. The sword of the LORD is filled with blood; it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the LORD hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. 7. And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be

soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness. 8. For *it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.*

Here we have a prophecy, as elsewhere we have a history, of the wars of the Lord, which, we are sure, are all both righteous and successful. This world, as it is his creature, he does good to, but, as it is in the interest of Satan, who is called *the god of this world*, he fights against it.

I. Here is the trumpet sounded, and the war proclaimed; (*v. 1.*) all nations must hear and hearken, not only because what God is about to do is well worthy their remark, (as *ch. xxxiii. 13.*) but because they are all concerned in it; it is with them that God has a quarrel, it is against them that God is coming forth in wrath. Let them all take notice that the great God is angry with them; his indignation is upon all nations, and therefore let all nations come near to hear. *The trumpet is blown in the city, (Amos iii. 6.) and the watchmen on the walls cry, Hearken to the voice of the trumpet, Jer. vi. 17. Let the earth hear, and the fulness thereof, for it is the Lord's, (Ps. xxiv. 1.)* and ought to hearken to its Maker and Master. The world must hear, and all things that come forth of it, the children of men, that are of the earth, earthy, come out of it, and must return to it; or the inanimate products of the earth are called to, as more likely to hearken than sinners, whose hearts are hardened against the calls of God. *Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord's controversy, Mich. vi. 2.* It is so just a controversy, that all the world may be safely appealed to concerning the equity of it.

II. Here is the manifesto published, setting forth,

1. Whom he makes war against; (*v. 2.*) *The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations;* they are all in confederacy against God and religion, all in the interests of the devil, and therefore he is angry with them all, even with all the nations that forget him. He has long *suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, (Acts xiv. 16.)* but now he will no longer keep silence. As they have all had the benefit of his patience, so they must all expect now to feel his resentments. His fury is in a special manner upon all their armies. (1.) Because with them they have done mischief to the people of God; those are they that have made bloody work with them, and therefore they must be sure to have blood given them to drink. (2.) Because with them they hope to make their part good against the justice and power of God; they trust to them as their defence, and therefore on them, in the first place, God's fury will come. Armies before God's fury are but as dry stubble before a consuming fire, though ever so numerous and courageous.

2. Whom he makes war for, and what are the grounds and reasons of the war; (*v. 8.*) *It is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and he it is to whom vengeance belongs, and who is never unrighteous in taking vengeance, Rom. iii. 5.* As there is a day of the Lord's patience, so there will be a day of his vengeance; for though he bear long, he will not bear always; it is the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. Zion is the holy city, the city of our solemnities, a type and figure of the church of God in the world. Zion has a just quarrel with her neighbours for the wrongs they have done her, for all their treacherous and barbarous usage of her, profaning her holy things, laying waste her palaces, and slaying her sons; she has left it to God to plead her cause, and he will do it when the time, even the set time, to favour Zion comes; then he will recompense to her persecutors and oppressors all the mischiefs they have done her. The controversy will be decided, that Zion has been wronged, and there-

in Zion's God has been himself abused; judgment will be given upon this decision, and execution done. Note, There is a time prefixed in the divine counsels for the deliverance of the church, and the destruction of her enemies, a year of the redeemed, which will come, *a year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion;* and we must patiently wait till then, and judge nothing before the time.

III. Here are the operations of the war, and the methods of it, settled, with an infallible assurance of success.

1. *The sword of the Lord is bathed in heaven,* that is all the preparation here made for the war, *v. 5.* It may, probably, allude to some custom they had then of bathing their swords in some liquor or other, to harden them or brighten them; it is the same with the furbishing of it, that it may glitter, *Ezek. xxi. 9—11.* God's sword is bathed in heaven, in his counsel and decree, in his justice and power, and then there is no standing before it.

2. It shall come down; what he has determined shall, without fail, be put in execution, it shall come down from heaven, and the higher the place is, whence it comes, the heavier will it fall; it will come down upon Idumea, the people of God's curse, that lie under his curse, and are by it doomed to destruction. Miserable, for ever miserable, are they that have by their sins made themselves the people of God's curse; for the sword of the Lord will infallibly attend the curse of the Lord, and execute the sentences of it; and those whom he curses are cursed indeed. It shall come down to judgment, to execute judgment upon sinners. Note, God's sword of war is always a sword of justice. It is observed of him out of whose mouth goeth the sharp sword, that in *righteousness he doth judge, and make war, Rev. xix. 11, 15.*

3. The nations and their armies shall be given up to the sword; (*v. 2.*) *God has delivered them to the slaughter,* and then they cannot deliver themselves, nor can all the friends they have deliver them from it. Those only are slain, whom God delivers to the slaughter, for the keys of death are in his hand; and, in delivering them to the slaughter, he has utterly destroyed them; their destruction is as sure, when God has doomed them to it, as if they were destroyed already, utterly destroyed. God has, in effect, delivered all the cruel enemies of his church to the slaughter by that word, (*Rev. xiii. 10.*) *He that kills with the sword, must be killed by the sword,* for the Lord is righteous.

4. Pursuant to the sentence, a terrible slaughter shall be made among them, *v. 6.* *The sword of the Lord,* when it comes down with commission, does vast execution; it is filled, satiate<sup>d</sup>, surfeited, with blood, the blood of the slain, and made fat with their fatness. When the day of God's abused mercy and patience is over, the sword of his justice gives no quarter, spares none. Men have by sin lost the honour of the human nature, and made themselves like the beasts that perish; they are therefore justly denied the compassion and respect that are owing to the human nature, and killed as beasts; and no more is made of slaying an army of men than of butchering a flock of lambs or goats, and feeding on the fat of the kidneys of rams. Nay, the sword of the Lord shall not only despatch the lambs and goats, the infantry of their armies, the poor common soldiers, but (*v. 7.*) the unicorns too shall be made to come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls, though they are ever so proud, and strong, and fierce, *the great men, and the mighty men, and the chief captains;* (*Rev. vi. 15.*) the sword of the Lord will make as easy a prey of them as of the lambs and the goats. The greatest of men are nothing before the wrath of the great God. See what bloody work will be made; *The land shall be*

*soaked with blood, as with the rain that comes often upon it, and in great abundance; and their dust, their dry and barren land, shall be made fat with the fatness of men slain in their full strength, as with manure.* Nay, even the mountains, which are hard and rocky, shall be melted with their blood, v. 3. These expressions are hyperbolic, (as St. John's vision of *blood to the horse-bridles*, Rev. xiv. 20.) and are made use of because they sound very dreadful to sense, (it makes us even shiver to think of such abundance of human gore,) and are therefore proper to express the terror of God's wrath, which is dreadful beyond conception and expression. See what work sin and wrath make even in this world, and think how much more terrible the wrath to come is, which will bring down the unicorns themselves to the bars of the pit.

5. This great slaughter will be a great sacrifice to the justice of God; (v. 6.) *The Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah*; there it is that the great Redeemer has his *garments dyed with blood*, ch. lxiii. 1. Sacrifices were intended for the honour of God, to make it appear that he hates sin, and demands satisfaction for it, and that nothing but blood will make atonement; for these ends, this slaughter is made, that in it *the wrath of God may be revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*, especially their ungodly, unrighteous enmity to his people, which was the sin that the Edomites were notoriously guilty of. In great sacrifices, abundance of beasts were killed, hecatombs offered, and their blood poured out before the altar; and so will it be in this day of the Lord's vengeance. And thus had the whole earth been soaked with the blood of sinners, if Jesus Christ, the great Propitiation, had not shed his blood for us; but those who reject him, and will not make a covenant with God by that Sacrifice, will themselves fall as victims to divine wrath. Damned sinners are everlasting sacrifices, Mark ix. 49. They that sacrifice not, (which is the character of the ungodly, Eccl. ix. 2.) must be sacrificed.

6. These slain shall be detestable to mankind, and shall be as much their loathing as ever they were their terror; (v. 3.) *They shall be cast out*, and none shall pay them the respect of a decent burial; but *their stink shall come out of their carcases*, that all people by the odious smell, as well as by the ghastly sight, may be made to conceive an indignation against sin, and a dread of the wrath of God. They lie unburied, that they may remain monuments of divine justice.

7. The effect and consequence of this slaughter shall be universal confusion and desolation, as if the whole frame of nature were dissolved and melted down; (v. 4.) all the host of heaven shall *pine and waste away*, so the word is; the sun shall be darkened, and the moon look black, or be turned into blood; the heavens themselves shall be rolled together as a scroll of parchment, when we have done with it, and lay it by, or as when it is shrivelled up by the heat of the fire. The stars shall fall as the leaves in autumn; all the beauty, joy, and comfort, of the vanquished nation shall be lost and done away, magistracy and government shall be abolished, and all dominion and rule, but that of the sword of war, shall fall. Conquerors, in those times, affected to lay waste the countries they conquered; and such a complete desolation is here described by such figurative expressions, as will yet have a literal and full accomplishment in the dissolution of all things at the end of time; of which last day of judgment the judgments which God does now sometimes remarkably execute on sinful nations, are figures, earnest, and forerunners; and by these we should be awakened to think of that, for which reason these expressions are used here, and Rev. vi. 12,

13. But they are used without a metaphor, 2 Pet. iii. 10. where we are told that *the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the earth shall be burnt up*.

9. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. 10. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever: 11. The cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness. 12. They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing. 13. And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof; and it shall be a habitation of dragons, and a court for owls. 14. The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech-owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest. 15. There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow; there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate. 16. Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read; no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them. 17. And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein.

This prophecy looks very black, but surely it looks no further than upon Edom and Bozrah: 1. It speaks the melancholy changes that are often made by the divine providence, in countries, cities, palaces, and families; places that have flourished, and been much frequented, strangely go to decay. We know not where to find the places where many great towns, celebrated in history, once stood. Fruitful countries, in process of time, are turned into barrenness, and pompous, populous cities into ruinous heaps. Old decayed castles look frightful, and their ruins are almost as much dreaded as ever their garrisons were. 2. It speaks the destroying judgments which are the effects of God's wrath, and the just punishment of those that are enemies to his people, which God will inflict, *when the year of the redeemed is come, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion*. Those that aim to ruin the church, can never do that, but will infallibly ruin themselves. 3. It speaks the final desolation of this wicked world, which is *reserved unto fire at the day of judgment*, 2 Pet. iii. 7. The earth itself, when it, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up, will (for aught I know) be turned into a hell to all those that set their affections only on earthly things: however, it shows us what will be the lot of the *generation of God's curse*.

I. The country shall become like the lake of Sodom, v. 9, 10. The streams thereof, that both watered the land, and pleased and refreshed the inhabitants, shall now be turned into pitch, shall be congealed, shall look black, and shall move slowly, or not at all. *Their floods to lazy streams of pitch shall turn;* so Sir R. Blackmore. The dust thereof shall be turned into brimstone; so combustible has sin made their land, that it shall take fire at the first spark of God's wrath struck upon it; and when it has taken fire, it shall become burning pitch; the fire shall be universal, not a house, or town, on fire, but a whole country; and it shall not be in the power of any to suppress or extinguish it; it shall burn continually, burn perpetually, and shall not be quenched night or day. The torment of those in hell, or that have a hell within them in their own consciences, is without interruption; the *smoke of this fire goes up for ever*. As long as there are provoking sinners on earth, *from one generation to another*, an increase of sinful men, to augment the fierce anger of the Lord, (Numb. xxxii. 14.) there will be a righteous God in heaven to punish them for it. And as long as a people keep up a succession of sinners, God will have a succession of plagues for them; nor will any that fall under the wrath of God, be ever able to recover themselves. It will be found, how light soever men make of it, that it is a *fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. If the land be doomed to destruction, none shall pass through it, but travellers will choose rather to go a great way about than come within the smell of it.

II. The cities shall become like old decayed houses, which, being deserted by the owners, look very frightful, being commonly possessed by beasts of prey, or birds of ill omen. See how dismally the palaces of the enemy look; the description is peculiarly elegant and fine.

1. God shall mark them for ruin and destruction; he shall stretch out upon Bozrah the line of confusion with the stones or plummetts of emptiness, v. 11. This intimates the equity of the sentence passed upon it; it is given according to the rules of justice, and the exact agreeableness of the execution with the sentence; the destruction is not wrought at random, but by line and level. The confusion and emptiness that shall overspread the face of the whole country, shall be like that of the whole earth when it was *Tohu and Bohu*, the very words here used, *without form and void*. Sin will soon turn a paradise into a chaos, and sullies the beauty of the whole creation, Gen. i. 2. When there is confusion there will soon be emptiness; but both are appointed by the Governor of the world, and in exact proportions.

2. Their great men shall be all cut off, and none of them shall dare to appear; (v. 12.) *They shall call the nobles of the kingdom* to take care of the arduous affairs which lie before them, but none shall be there to take this ruin under their hand, and all her princes, having the sad tidings brought them, shall be nothing, shall be at their wits' end, and not be able to stand them in stead, to shelter them from destruction.

III. Even the houses of state, and those of strength, shall become as wildernesses; (v. 13.) not only grass shall grow, but *thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof*, and there shall be none to cut them up, or tread them down. We sometimes see ruined buildings thus overgrown with rubbish. It intimates that the place shall not only be uninhabited and unfrequented, where a full court used to be kept, but that it shall be under the curse of God; for thorns and thistles were the production of the curse, Gen. iii. 18.

IV. They shall become the residence and ren-

devous of fearful, frightful beasts and birds, which usually frequent such melancholy places, because there they may be undisturbed; and when they are frightened thither, they help to frighten men thence. This circumstance of the desolation, being apt to strike a horror upon the mind, is much enlarged upon here, v. 11. The cormorant shall possess it, or the pelican, which affects to be solitary, (Ps. cii. 6.) and the bittern, which makes a hideous noise the owl, a melancholy bird, the raven, a bird of prey, invited by the dead carcases, shall dwell there, (*with all the ill-boding monsters of the air*, Sir R. B.) all the unclean birds, which were not for the service of man, v. 13. *It shall be a habitation for dragons*, which are poisonous and hurtful

And in their lofty rooms of state,  
Where cringing sycophants did wait,  
Dragons shall hiss, and hungry wolves shall howl.  
In courts before by mighty lords posset,  
The serpent shall erect his speckled crest,  
Or fold his circling spires to rest. SIR R. BLACKMORE.

That which was a court for princes, shall now be a court for owls or ostriches; (v. 14.) *The wild beasts of the desert*, the dry and sandy country, shall meet, as it were by appointment, with the wild beasts of the island, the wet marshy country, and shall regale themselves with such a perfect desolation as they shall find there.

Leopards, and all the rav'ning brotherhoods,  
That range the plains, or lurk in woods,  
Each other shall invite to come,  
And make this wilder place their home.  
Fierce beasts of every frightful shape and size,  
Shall settle here their bloody colonies.

SIR R. BLACKMORE.

The satyr shall cry to his fellow to go with him to this desert place, or, being there, they shall please themselves that they have found such an agreeable habitation. There shall the screech-owl rest, a night-bird, and an ominous one; the great owl shall there make her nest, (v. 15.) and lay and hatch; the breed of them shall be kept up, to provide heirs for this desolate place; the vultures, which feast on carcases, shall be *gathered there, every one with his mate*. Now, observe, 1. How the places which men have deserted, and keep at a distance from, are proper receptacles for other animals, which the providence of God takes care of, and will not neglect. 2. Whom they resemble, that are morose, unsociable, and unconvertible, and affect a melancholy retirement; they are like these solitary creatures, that take delight in desolations. 3. What a dismal change sin makes; it turns a fruitful land into barrenness, a frequented city into a wilderness.

V. Here is an assurance given of the full accomplishment of this prediction, even to the most minute circumstance of it; (v. 16, 17.) *Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read*. When this destruction comes, compare the event with the prediction, and you will find it to answer exactly. Note, The book of the prophets is the book of the Lord, (and we ought to consult it, and converse with it,) that has the authority of a divine origin: we must not only read it, but seek out of it, search into it, turn first to one text, and then to another, and compare them together. Abundance of useful knowledge might thus be extracted, by a diligent search, out of the scriptures, which cannot be got by a superficial reading of them. When you have read the prediction out of the book of the Lord, then observe, 1. That according to what you have read, so you see; not one of these shall fail, either beast or fowl: and it being foretold that they shall possess it from generation to generation, in order to that, that the species may be propagated, none shall want her mate; these marks of desolation shall be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the land. 2. That God's mouth having commanded this direful mus-

ter, *his Spirit shall gather them*, as the creatures by instinct were gathered to Adam to be named, and to Noah to be housed. What God's word has appointed, his Spirit will effect and bring about, for no word of God shall fall to the ground. The word of God's promise shall in like manner be accomplished by the operations of the Spirit. 3. That there is an exact order and proportion observed in the accomplishment of this threatening; he has cast the lot for these birds and beasts, so that each one shall know his place, as readily as if it were marked by line. See the like, Joel ii. 7, 8. *They shall not break their ranks, neither shall one thrust another.* The soothsayers among the heathen foretold events by the flight of birds, as if the fate of men depended on them. But here we find that the flight of birds is under the direction of the God of Israel; he has cast the lot for them. 4. That the desolation shall be perpetual; *They shall possess it for ever.* God's Jerusalem may be laid in ruins; but Jerusalem of old recovered itself out of its ruins, till it gave place to the gospel-Jerusalem, which may be brought low, but shall be rebuilt, and shall continue till it give place to the heavenly Jerusalem. But the enemies of the church shall be for ever desolate, shall be punished with an everlasting destruction.

### CHAP. XXXV.

As after the predictions of God's judgments upon the world, (ch. xxiv.) follows a promise of great mercy to be had in store for his church, (ch. xxv.) so, here, after a black and dreadful scene of confusion in the foregoing chapter, we have, in this, a bright and pleasant one, which though it foretells the flourishing estate of Hezekiah's kingdom in the latter part of his reign, yet surely looks as far beyond that as the prophecy in the foregoing chapter does beyond the destruction of the Edomites; both were typical, and it concerns us most to look at those things which they were typical of, the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of heaven. When the world, which lies in wickedness, shall be laid in ruins, and the Jewish church, which persisted in infidelity, shall become a desolation, then the gospel-church shall be set up, and made to flourish. I. The Gentiles shall be brought into it, v. 1, 2, 7. II. The well-wishers to it, who were weak and timorous, shall be encouraged, v. 3, 4. III. Miracles shall be wrought both on the souls and on the bodies of men, v. 5, 6. IV. The gospel-church shall be conducted in the way of holiness, v. 8, 9. V. It shall be brought at last to endless joys, v. 10. Thus do we find more of Christ, and heaven, in this chapter, than one would have expected in the Old Testament.

1. **T**HE wilderness, and the solitary place, shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. 2. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God. 3. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. 4. Say to them *that are of a fearful heart*, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come *with vengeance, even God with a recompense*; he will come and save you.

In these verses, we have,

1. The desert land blooming. In the chapter before, we had a populous and fruitful country turned into a horrid wilderness; here we have, in lieu of that, a wilderness turned into a good land. When the land of Judah was freed from the Assyrian army, those parts of the country that had been made as a wilderness by the ravages and outrages they committed, began to recover themselves, and to look

pleasantly again, and to blossom as the rose. When the Gentile nations, that had been long as a wilderness, bringing forth no fruit to God, received the gospel, joy came with it to them, Ps. lxxvii. 3, 4.—xcvi. 11, 12. When Christ was preached in Samaria, there was *great joy in that city*, (Acts viii. 8.) they that sat in darkness saw a great and joyful light. And then they that blossomed, gave hopes of abundance of fruit; for that was it which the preachers of the gospel aimed at, (John xv. 16.) *to go, and bring forth fruit*, Rom. i. 13. Col. i. 13. Though blossoms are not fruit, and often miscarry and come to nothing, yet they are in order to fruit. Converting grace makes the soul that was a wilderness *to rejoice with joy and singing*, and to blossom abundantly. This flourishing desert shall have all the glory of Lebanon given to it, which consisted in the strength and stateliness of its cedars, together with the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, which consisted in corn and cattle. Whatever is valuable in any institution, is brought into the gospel. All the beauty of the Jewish church was admitted into the Christian church, and appeared in its perfection, as the apostle shows at large in his epistle to the Hebrews; whatever was excellent and desirable in the Mosaic economy, is translated into the evangelical institutes.

2. The glory of God shining forth; *They shall see the glory of the Lord*; God will manifest himself more than ever in his grace and love to mankind, (for that is his glory and excellency,) and he shall give them eyes to see it, and hearts to be duly affected with it. This is that which will make the desert blossom. The more we see by faith of the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God, the more joyful and the more fruitful shall we be.

3. The feeble and faint-hearted encouraged, v. 3, 4. God's prophets and ministers are in a special manner charged, by virtue of their office, to *strengthen the weak hands*, to comfort those who could not yet recover the fright they had been put into by the Assyrian army, with an assurance that God would now return in mercy to them. This is the design of the gospel; (1.) To strengthen those that are weak, and to confirm them; the weak hands, which are unable either to work or fight, and can hardly be lifted up in prayer, and the feeble knees, which are unable either to stand or walk, and unfit for the race set before us. The gospel furnishes us with strengthening considerations, and shows us where strength is laid up for us. Among true Christians there are many that have weak hands and feeble knees, that are yet but babes in Christ; but it is our duty to strengthen our brethren, (Luke xxii. 32.) not only to bear with the weak, but to do what we can to confirm them, Rom. xv. 1. 1 Thess. v. 14. It is our duty also to strengthen ourselves, to lift up *the hands which hang down*, (Heb. xii. 12.) improving the strength God has given us, and exerting it. (2.) To hearten those that are timorous and discouraged; *Say to them that are of a fearful heart*, because of their own weakness, and the strength of their enemies, that are hasty, (so the word is,) that are for betaking themselves to flight, upon the first alarm, and giving up the cause, that say, in their haste, "We are cut off and undone;" (Ps. xxxi. 22.) there is enough in the gospel to silence these fears; it says to them, and let them say it to themselves, and one to another, *Be strong, fear not*. Fear is weakening; the more we strive against it, the stronger we are both for doing and suffering; and, for our encouragement to strive, he that says to us, *Be strong*, has laid help for us upon One that is mighty.

4. Assurance given of the approach of a Saviour; *Your God will come with vengeance*. God will appear for you against your enemies, he will recom-



pense both their injuries and your losses." The Messiah will come, in the fulness of time, to take vengeance on the powers of darkness, to spoil them, and make a show of them openly, to recompense those that mourn in Zion with abundant comforts; *He will come and save us*: with the hopes of this, the Old Testament saints strengthened their weak hands. He will come again at the end of time, will come in flaming fire, to recompense tribulation to those who have troubled his people, and to those who were troubled, rest, such a rest as will be not only a final period to, but a full reward of, all their troubles, 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. They whose *hearts tremble for the ark of God*, and are under a concern for his church in the world, may silence their fears with this, God will take the work into his own hands. Your God will come, who pleads your cause, and owns your interest, even God himself, who is God alone.

5. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: 6. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. 7. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, *shall be grass, with reeds and rushes*. 8. And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it *shall be* for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err *therein*. 9. No lion shall be there, nor *any* ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there: but the redeemed shall walk *there*. 10. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

"Then when your God shall come, even Christ, to set up his kingdom in the world, to which all the prophets bare witness, especially toward the conclusion of their prophecies of the temporal deliverances of the church, and this evangelical prophet especially—then look for great things."

I. Wonders shall be wrought in the kingdoms both of nature and grace, wonders of mercy wrought upon the children of men, sufficient to evince that it is no less than a God that comes to us.

1. Wonders shall be wrought on men's bodies; (v. 5, 6.) *The eyes of the blind shall be opened*; this was often done by our Lord Jesus, when he was here upon earth, with a word's speaking, and one he gave sight to, that was *born blind*, Matth. ix. 27.—xii. 22.—xx. 30. John ix. 6. By his power the ears of the deaf also were unstopped; with one word, *Ephphatha—Be opened*, Mark vii. 34. Many that were lame had the use of their limbs restored so perfectly, that they could not only go, but leap, and with so much joy to them, that they could not forbear leaping for joy, as that impotent man, Acts iii. 8. The dumb also were enabled to speak, and then no marvel that they were disposed to sing for joy, Matth. ix. 32, 33. These miracles Christ wrought, to prove that he was sent of God, (John iii. 2.) nay, working them by his own power, and

in his own name, he proved that he was God, the same who at first made man's mouth, the hearing ear, and the seeing eye. When he would prove to John's disciples his divine mission, he did it by miracles of this kind, in which this scripture was fulfilled. 2. Wonders, greater wonders, shall be wrought on men's souls. By the word and Spirit of Christ, those that were spiritually blind were enlightened, (Acts xxvi. 18.) those that were deaf to the calls of God, were made to hear them readily, as Lydia, whose heart *the Lord opened*, so that *she attended*, Acts xvi. 14. Those that were impotent to every thing that is good, by divine grace are made not only able for it, but active in it, and run the way of God's commandments. Those also that were dumb, and knew not how to speak of God, or to God, having their understandings opened to know him, shall thereby have their lips opened to show forth his praise. The tongue of the dumb shall sing for joy, the joy of God's salvation. Praise shall be perfected out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.

II. The Spirit shall be poured out from on high. There shall be waters and streams, rivers of living water; when our Saviour spake of these, as the fulfilling of the scripture, and, most probably, of this scripture, the evangelist tells us, *He spake of the Spirit*, (John vii. 38, 39.) as does also this prophet; (ch. xxxii. 15.) so here, (v. 6.) *in the wilderness*, where one would least expect it, shall waters break out. This was fulfilled when the *Holy Ghost fell upon the Gentiles that heard the word*; (Acts x. 44.) then were the fountains of life opened, whence streams flowed, that watered the earth abundantly. These waters are said to *break out*, which denotes a pleasing surprise to the Gentile world, such as brought them, as it were, into a new world.

The blessed effect of this shall be, that the *parched ground shall become a pool*, v. 7. They that laboured, and were heavy-laden, under the burthen of guilt, and were scorched with the sense of divine wrath, found rest, and refreshment, and abundant comforts, in the gospel. In the thirsty land, where no water was, no ordinances, (Ps. lxxiii. 1.) there shall be springs of water, a gospel-ministry, and by that the administration of all gospel-ordinances in their purity and plenty, which are *the river that makes glad the city of our God*, Ps. xli. 4. *In the habitation of dragons*, who chose to dwell in the parched, scorched ground, (ch. xxxiv. 9, 13.) these waters shall flow, and dispossess them, so that, *where each lay, shall be grass, with reeds and rushes*, great plenty of useful productions. Thus it was when Christian churches were planted, and flourished greatly, in the cities of the Gentiles, which, for many ages, had been habitations of dragons, or devils rather, as Babylon; (Rev. xviii. 2.) when the property of the idols' temples was altered, and they were converted to the service of Christianity, then the habitations of dragons became fruitful fields.

III. The way of religion and godliness shall be laid open: it is here called *the way of holiness*, (v. 8.) the way both of holy worship and a holy conversation. Holiness is the rectitude of the human nature and will, in conformity to the divine nature and will. The way of holiness is that course of religious duties in which men ought to walk and press forward, with an eye to the glory of God, and their own felicity in the enjoyment of him. "When our God shall come to save us, he shall chalk out to us this way by his gospel, so as it had never been before described."

1. It shall be an appointed way; not a way of sufferance, but a highway, and a way into which we are directed by a divine authority, and in which we are protected by a divine warrant. It is the King's highway, the King of king's highway, in which, though we may be way-laid, we cannot be stopped.

The *way of holiness* is the way of God's commandments, it is (as highways are) the *good old way*, Jer. vi. 16.

2. It shall be an appropriated way; the way in which God will bring his own chosen to himself, but the *unclean shall not pass over it*, either to defile it, or to disturb those that walk in it. It is a way by itself, distinguished from the way of the world, for it is a way of separation from, and nonconformity to, this world; it shall be for those whom the Lord has *set apart for himself*, (Ps. iv. 3.) shall be reserved for them, *the redeemed shall walk there*, and the satisfaction they take in these *ways of pleasantness* shall be out of the reach of molestation from an evil world. *The unclean shall not pass over it*, for it shall be a fair way; those that walk in it are the *undefiled in the way*, who *escape the pollution that is in the world*.

3. It shall be a straight way; *The wayfaring men*, who choose to travel in it, *though fools*, of weak capacity in other things, shall have such plain directions from the word and Spirit of God, in this way, that they *shall not err therein*; not that they shall be infallible in their own conduct, or that they shall in nothing mistake; but they shall not be guilty of any fatal misconduct, shall not so miss their way, but that they shall recover it again, and get well to their journey's end. They that are in the narrow way, though some may fall into one path, and others into another, not all equally right, but all meeting at last in the same end, shall yet never fall into the broad way again; the Spirit of truth shall lead them into all truth that is necessary for them. Note, The way to heaven is a plain way, and easy to hit. *God has chosen the foolish things of the world*, and made them wise to salvation. *Knowledge is easy to him that understands*.

4. It shall be a safe way; *No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast*, (v. 9.) none to hurt and destroy; they that keep close to this way keep out of the reach of Satan, the roaring lion, that wicked one touches them not. They that walk in the way of holiness may proceed with a holy security and serenity of mind, knowing that nothing can do them any real hurt; they shall be quiet from the fear of evil. It was in Hezekiah's days, some time after the captivity of the ten tribes, that God, being displeased with the colonies settled there, *sent lions among them*, 2 Kings xvii. 25. But Judah keeps her integrity, and therefore *no lion shall be there*. Those that walk in the *way of holiness* must separate themselves from the unclean and the ravenous, must *save themselves from an untoward generation*; hoping that they themselves are of the redeemed, let them walk *with the redeemed*, which *shall walk there*.

IV. The end of this way shall be everlasting joy, v. 10. This precious promise of peace now, will end shortly in endless joys and rest for the soul. Here is good news for the citizens of Zion, rest to the weary; *The ransomed of the Lord*, who therefore ought to *follow him wherever he goes*, (Rev. xiv. 4.) shall *return and come to Zion*; 1. To serve and worship God in the church militant; they shall deliver themselves out of Babylon, (Zech. ii. 7.) shall *ask the way to Zion*, (Jer. l. 5.) and shall *find the way*, ch. lii. 12. God will open them a door of escape out of their captivity, and it shall be an effectual door, though there be many adversaries. They shall join themselves to the gospel-church, *that mount Zion, that city of the living God*, Heb. xii. 22. They shall come with songs of joy and praise for their deliverance out of Babylon, where they wept upon every remembrance of Zion, Ps. cxxxvii. 1. They that by faith are made citizens of the gospel-Zion, may *go on their way rejoicing*; (Acts viii. 39.) they shall sing in the ways of the Lord, and be

still praising him; they rejoice in Christ Jesus, and the sorrows and sighs of their convictions are made to flee away by the power of divine consolations. They that mourn are blessed, for they shall be comforted. 2. To see and enjoy God in the church triumphant; they that walk in the *way of holiness*, under the conduct of their Redeemer, shall come to Zion at last, to the heavenly Zion, shall come in a body, shall all be presented together, *faultless, at the coming of Christ's glory with exceeding joy*; (Jude 24. Rev. vii. 17.) they shall come with songs. When God's people returned out of Babylon to Zion, *they came weeping*; (Jer. l. 4.) but they shall come to heaven singing a new song, which *no man can learn*, Rev. xiv. 3. When they shall *enter into the joy of their Lord*, it shall be what the joys of this world never could be, everlasting joy, without mixture, interruption, or period; it shall not only fill their hearts, to their own perfect and perpetual satisfaction, but it shall be upon their heads, as an ornament of grace, and a crown of glory, as a garland worn in token of victory; their joy shall be visible, and no longer a secret thing, as it is here in this world; it shall be proclaimed, to the glory of God, and their mutual encouragement; they shall then obtain the joy and gladness which they could never expect on this side heaven; *and sorrow and sighing shall flee away* for ever, as the shadows of the night before the rising sun. Thus these prophecies which relate to the Assyrian invasion, conclude, for the support of the people of God under that calamity, and to direct their joy, in their deliverance from it, to something higher. Our joyful hopes and prospects of eternal life should swallow up both all the sorrows, and all the joys, of this present time.

## CHAP. XXXVI.

The prophet Isaiah is, in this and the three following chapters, an historian; for the scripture-history, as well as the scripture prophecy, is given by inspiration of God, and was dictated to holy men. Many of the prophecies of the foregoing chapters had their accomplishment in Sennacherib's invading of Judah, and besieging of Jerusalem, and the miraculous defeat he met with there; and therefore the story of this is here inserted, both for the explication and for the confirmation of the prophecy. The key of prophecy is to be found in history; and here, that we might have the readier entrance, it is, as it were, hung at the door. The exact fulfilling of this prophecy might serve to confirm the faith of God's people in the other prophecies, the accomplishment of which was at a greater distance. Whether this story was taken from the book of the Kings, and added here, or whether it was first written by Isaiah here, and from hence taken into the book of Kings, it is not material. But the story is the same almost *verbatim*; and it was so memorable an event, that it was well worthy to be twice recorded, 2 Kings xviii. and xix. and here; and an abridgment of it likewise, 2 Chron. xxxii. We shall be but short in our observations upon this story here, having largely explained it there. In this chapter, we have, I. The descent which the king of Assyria made upon Judah, and his success against all the defended cities, v. l. II. The conference he desired to have with Hezekiah, and the managers on both sides, 2, 3. III. Rabshakeh's railing blasphemous speech, with which he designed to frighten Hezekiah into a submission, and persuade him to surrender at discretion, v. 4. . 10 IV. His appeal to the people, and his attempt to persuade them to desert Hezekiah, and so force him to surrender, v. 11. . 20. V. The report of this made to Hezekiah by his agents, v. 21, 22.

1. **N**OW it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defended cities of Judah, and took them. 2. And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem, unto

king Hezekiah, with a great army: and he stood by the conduit of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field. 3. Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiab's son, which was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder. 4. And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? 5. I say, *sayest thou*, (but *they are but vain words*,) *I have counsel and strength for war: now, on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?* 6. Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him. 7. But if thou say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: *is it not he whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?* 8. Now, therefore, give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them. 9. How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 10. And am I now come up without the LORD against this land to destroy it? The LORD said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

We shall here only observe some practical lessons from hence;

1. That a people may be in the way of their duty, and yet meet with trouble and distress. Hezekiah was reforming, and his people in some measure reformed; and yet their country is at that time invaded, and a great part of it laid waste. Perhaps they began to grow remiss and cool in the work of reformation; were doing it by halves, and ready to sit down short of a thorough reformation; and then God visited them with this judgment, to put life into them, and that good cause. We must not wonder, if, when we are doing well, God sends afflictions to quicken us to do better, to do our best, and to press forward toward perfection.

2. That we must never be secure of the continuance of our peace in this world, nor think our mountain stands so strong, that it cannot be moved. Hezekiah was not only a pious king, but prudent, both in his administration at home, and in his treaties abroad. His affairs were in a good posture, and he seemed particularly to be upon good terms with the king of Assyria, for he had lately made his peace with him by a rich present; (2 Kings xviii. 14.) and yet that perfidious prince pours an army into his country all of a sudden, and lays it waste. It is good for us, therefore, always to keep up an expectation of trouble, that, when it comes, it may be no surprise to us, and then it will be the less a terror.

3. That God sometimes permits the enemies of his people, even those that are most impious and treacherous, to prevail far against them. The king of Assyria took all, or most, of the defended cities of Judah, and then the country would of course be

an easy prey to him. Wickedness may prosper awhile, but cannot prosper always.

4. Proud men love to talk big, to boast of what they are and have, and have done, nay and of what they will do, to insult over others, and set all mankind at defiance; though thereby they render themselves ridiculous to all wise men, and obnoxious to the wrath of that God who resists the proud. But thus they think to make themselves feared, though they make themselves hated, and to carry their point by *great swelling words of vanity*, Jude 16.

5. The enemies of God's people endeavour to conquer them by frightening them, especially by frightening them from their confidence in God. Thus Rabshakeh here, with noise and banter, runs down Hezekiah as utterly unable to cope with his master, or in the least to make head against him. It concerns us therefore, that we may keep our ground against the enemies of our souls, to keep up our spirits by keeping up our hope in God.

6. It is acknowledged on all hands, that those who forsake God's service, forfeit his protection. If that had been true, which Rabshakeh alleged, that Hezekiah had thrown down God's altars, he might justly infer, that he could not with any assurance trust in him for succour and relief, v. 7. We may say thus to presuming sinners, who say that they trust in the Lord and in his mercy; Is not this he whose commandments they have lived in the contempt of, whose name they have dishonoured, and whose ordinances they have slighted? How then can they expect to find favour with him.

7. It is an easy thing, and very common, for those that persecute the church and people of God, to pretend a commission from him for so doing. Rabshakeh could say, *Am I now come up without the Lord?* when really he was come up *against the Lord*, ch. xxxvii. 28. They that kill the servants of the Lord think they do him service, and say, *Let the Lord be glorified*. But, sooner or later, they will be made to know their error to their cost, to their confusion.

11. Then said Eliakim, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall. 12. But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee, to speak these words? *hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung and drink their own piss with you?* 13. Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria: 14. Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he shall not be able to deliver you. 15. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. 16. Hearken not to Hezekiah; for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make *an agreement with me by a present*, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern;

17. Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. 18. *Beware* lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 19. Where *are* the gods of Hamath and Arpad? where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? 20. Who *are they* among all the gods of these lands that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand? 21. But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not. 22. Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, that *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with *their* clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

We may hence learn these lessons:

1. That, while princes and counsellors have public matters under debate, it is not fair to appeal to the people. It was a reasonable motion which Hezekiah's plenipotentiaries made, that this parley should be held in a language which the people did not understand, (v. 11.) because reasons of state are secret things, and ought to be kept secret, the vulgar being incompetent judges of them. It is therefore an unfair practice, and not doing as men would be done by, to incense subjects against their rulers by base insinuations.

2. Proud and haughty scornors, the fairer they are spoken to, commonly speak the fouler. Nothing could be said more mildly and respectfully than that which Hezekiah's agents said to Rabshakeh. Beside that the thing itself was just, which they desired, they called themselves *his servants*, they petitioned for it, *Speak, we pray thee*; but this made him the more spiteful and imperious. To give rough answers to those who give us soft answers, is one way of rendering evil for good; and those are wicked indeed, and it is to be feared, incurably, with whom that which usually turns away wrath does but make bad worse.

3. When Satan would tempt men from trusting in God, and cleaving to him, he does it by insinuating, that, in yielding to him, they may better their condition; but it is a false suggestion, and grossly absurd, and therefore to be rejected with the utmost abhorrence. When the world and the flesh say to us, "*Make an agreement with us, and come out to us, submit to our dominion, and come into our interests, and you shall eat every one of his own vine;*" they do but deceive us, promising liberty then when they would lead us into the basest captivity and slavery. One might as well take Rabshakeh's word as theirs, for kind usage and fair quarter; therefore, *when they speak fair, believe them not*. Let them say what they will, there is no land like the land of promise, the holy land.

4. Nothing can be more absurd in itself, nor a greater affront to the true and living God, than to compare him with the gods of the heathen; as if he could do no more for the protection of his worshippers than they can for the protection of theirs; and as if the God of Israel could as easily be mastered as the gods of Hamath and Arpad. Where-

as they are vanity and a lie, they are nothing; he is the great *I AM*: they are the creatures of men's fancy, and the works of men's hands; he is the Creator of all things.

5. Presumptuous sinners are ready to think, that, because they have been too hard for their fellow-creatures, they are therefore a match for their Creator. This and the other nation they have subdued, and therefore the Lord himself shall not deliver Jerusalem out of their hand. But though the potsherds may strive with the potsherds of the earth, let them not strive with the Potter.

6. It is sometimes prudent not to *answer a fool according to his folly*. Hezekiah's command was, "*Answer him not*"; it will but provoke him to rail and blaspheme yet more and more; leave it to God to stop his mouth, for you cannot." They had reason enough on their side, but it would be hard to speak it to such an unreasonable adversary without a mixture of passion; and if they should fall a railing like him, Rabshakeh would be too hard for them at that weapon.

7. It becomes the people of God to lay to heart the dishonour done to God by the blasphemies of wicked men, though they do not think it prudence to reply to those blasphemies. Though they *answered him not a word*, yet they rent their clothes, in a holy zeal for the glory of God's name, and a holy indignation at the contempt put upon it. They tore their garments, when they heard blasphemy, as taking no pleasure in their own ornaments, when God's honour suffered.

## CHAP. XXXVII.

In this chapter we have a further repetition of the story which we had before in the book of *Kings*, concerning Sennacherib. In the chapter before, we had him conquering, and threatening to conquer. In this chapter, we have him falling, and, at last, fallen, in answer to prayer, and in performance of many of the prophecies which we have met with in the foregoing chapters. Here we have, I. Hezekiah's pious resentment of Rabshakeh's impious discourse, v. 1. II. The gracious message he sent to Isaiah to desire his prayers, v. 2. . 5. III. The encouraging answer which Isaiah sent him from God, assuring him that God would plead his cause against the king of Assyria, v. 6, 7. IV. An abusive letter which the king of Assyria sent to Hezekiah, to the same purport with Rabshakeh's speech, v. 8. . 13. V. Hezekiah's humble prayer to God upon the receipt of this letter, v. 14. . 20. VI. The further full answer which God sent him by Isaiah, promising him that his affairs should shortly take a happy turn, that the storm should blow over, and every thing should appear bright and serene, v. 21. . 35. VII. The immediate accomplishment of this prophecy in the ruin of his army, (v. 36.) and the murder of himself, v. 37, 38. All which was largely opened 2 *Kings* 19.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard *it*, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. 2. And he sent Eliakim, who *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. 3. And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and *there* is not strength to bring forth. 4. It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the

LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up *thy* prayer for the remnant that is left. 5. So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. 6. And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. 7. Behold, I will send a blast upon him; and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land: and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

We may observe here,

1. That the best way to baffle the malicious designs of our enemies against us, is, to be driven by them to God and to our duty, and so to fetch meat out of the eater. Rabshakeh intended to frighten Hezekiah *from* the Lord, but it proves that he frightens him *to* the Lord. The wind, instead of forcing the traveller's coat from him, makes him wrap it the closer about him. The more Rabshakeh reproaches God, the more Hezekiah studies to honour him, by rending his clothes for the dishonour done to him, and attending in his sanctuary to know his mind.

2. That it well becomes great men to desire the prayers of good men and good ministers. Hezekiah sent messengers, and honourable ones, those of the first rank, to Isaiah, to desire his prayers, remembering how much his prophecies of late had plainly looked toward the events of the present day; in dependence upon which, it is probable, he doubted not but that the issue would be comfortable, yet he would have it to be so in answer to prayer: *This is a day of trouble*, therefore let it be a day of prayer.

3. When we are most at a plunge, we should be most earnest in prayer; Now that the *children are brought to the birth*, but *there is not strength to bring forth*, now let prayer come, and help at a dead lift; when pains are most strong, let prayers be most lively; and when we meet with the greatest difficulties, then is a time to stir up not ourselves only, but others also, to take hold on God. Prayer is the midwife of mercy, that helps to bring it forth.

4. It is an encouragement to pray, though we have but some hopes of mercy; (*v. 4.*) *It may be, the Lord thy God will hear; who knows but he will return and repent?* The '*it may be*' of the prospect of the haven of blessings, should quicken us with double diligence to ply the oar of prayer.

5. When there is a remnant left, and but a remnant, it concerns us to lift up a prayer for that remnant, *v. 4.* The prayer that reaches heaven must be lifted up by a strong faith, earnest desires, and a direct intention to the glory of God; all which should be quickened when we come to the last stake.

6. Those that have made God their Enemy, we have no reason to be afraid of, for they are marked for ruin; and though they may hiss, they cannot hurt. Rabshakeh has blasphemed God, and therefore let not Hezekiah be afraid of him, *v. 6.* He has made God a Party to the cause by his invectives, and therefore judgment will certainly be given against him. God will certainly plead his own cause.

7. Sinners' fears are but prefaces to their falls; he shall *hear the rumour* of the slaughter of his army, which shall oblige him to retire to his own land, and there he shall be slain, *v. 7.* The terrors that pursue him shall bring him at last to the *king of terrors*, Job xviii. 11, 14. The curses that come upon sinners shall overtake them.

8. So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish. 9. And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee: and when he heard *it*, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, 10. Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered? 12. Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, *as* Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which *were* in Telassar? 13. Where *is* the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? 14. And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. 15. And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying, 16. O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest *between* the cherubims, thou *art* the God, *even* thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. 17. Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. 18. Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries, 19. And have cast their gods into the fire; for they *were* no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them. 20. Now, therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou *art* the LORD, *even* thou only.

We may observe here,

1. That if God gives us inward satisfaction in the promise, this may confirm us in our silent bearing of reproaches. God answered Hezekiah, but it does not appear that he, after deliberation, sent any answer to Rabshakeh; but God having taken the work into his own hands, he quietly left the matter with him. So Rabshakeh returned to the king his master for fresh instructions.

2. Those that delight in war shall have enough of it. Sennacherib, without provocation given *v.* him, or warning given by him, went forth against Judah; and now with as little ceremony the king of Ethiopia goes forth to war against him, *v. 9.* They that are quarrelsome may expect to be quarrelled with; and God sometimes checks the rage of his enemies by giving it a powerful diversion.

3. It is bad to talk proudly and profanely, but it

is worse to write so, for that argues more deliberation and design, and what is written spreads further, lasts longer, and does the more mischief; atheism and irreligion, written, will certainly be reckoned for another day.

4. Great successes often harden sinners' hearts in their sinful ways, and make them the more daring. Because the kings of Assyria have destroyed all lands, (though, in fact, they were but a few that fell within their reach,) therefore they doubt not but to destroy God's land; because the gods of the nations were unable to help, they conclude the God of Israel is so; because the idolatrous kings of Hamath and Arpad became an easy prey to them, therefore the religious reforming king of Judah must needs be so too. Thus is the proud man ripened for ruin by the sunshine of prosperity.

5. Liberty of access to the throne of grace, and liberty of speech there, are the unspeakable privileges of the Lord's people at all times, especially in times of distress and danger. Hezekiah took Sennacherib's letter, and spread it before the Lord; not designing to make any complaints against him, but those grounded upon his own hand-writing. Let the thing speak itself, here it is in black and white; *Open thine eyes, O Lord, and see.* God allows his praying people to be humbly free with him, to utter all their words, as Jephthah did, before him, to spread the letter, whether of a friend or an enemy, before him, and leave the contents, the concern of it, with him.

6. The great fundamental principles of our religion, applied by faith, and improved in prayer, will be of sovereign use to us in our particular exigencies and distresses, whatever they are; to them therefore we must have recourse, and abide by them; so Hezekiah did here. He encouraged himself with this, that the God of Israel is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts; of the hosts of Israel, to animate them; of the hosts of their enemies, to dispirit and restrain them; that he is God alone, and there is none that can stand in competition with him; that he is the *God of all the kingdoms of the earth*, and disposes of them all as he pleases, for he made heaven and earth; and therefore both can do any thing, and does every thing.

7. When we are afraid of men that are great destroyers, we may with humble boldness appeal to God as the great Saviour. They have indeed destroyed the nations, who had thrown themselves out of the protection of the true God by worshipping false gods; but the Lord, the God alone, is our God, our King, our Lawgiver, and he will save us, who is *the Saviour of them that believe.*

8. We have enough to take hold of, in our wrestling with God by prayer, if we can but plead that his glory is interested in our case; that his name will be profaned if we are run down, and glorified if we are relieved. Thence therefore will our most prevailing pleas be drawn; Do it for thy glory's sake.

21. Then Isaiah, the son of Amoz, sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria: 22. This is the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him, The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. 23. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou ex-

alted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high! *Even* against the Holy One of Israel. 24. By thy servants hast thou reproached the LORD, and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof: and I will enter into the height of his border, and the forest of his Carmel. 25. I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places. 26. Hast thou not heard long ago, *how* I have done it; and of ancient times that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps. 27. Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb; as the grass on the house-tops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up. 28. But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. 29. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears; therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way which thou camest. 30. And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such as groweth of itself; and the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof. 31. And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward: 32. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this. 33. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. 34. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD. 35. For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. 36. Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. 37. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. 38. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and



they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.

We may here observe,

1. That those who receive messages of terror from men with patience, and send messages of faith to God by prayer, may expect messages of grace and peace from God for their comfort, then when they are most cast down. Isaiah sent a long answer to Hezekiah's prayer, in God's name, sent it in writing, (for it was too long to be sent by word of mouth,) and sent it by way of return to his prayer, relation being thereunto had; "*Whereas thou hast prayed to me, know, for thy comfort, that thy prayer is heard.*" Isaiah might have referred him to the prophecies he had delivered, (particularly that, *ch. 10.*) and bid him pick out an answer from thence; but, that he might have abundant consolation, a message is sent him on purpose. The correspondence between earth and heaven is never let fall on God's side.

2. Those who magnify themselves, especially who magnify themselves against God and his people, do really vilify themselves, and make themselves contemptible in the eyes of all wise men; *The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised Sennacherib, and all his impotent malice and menaces; she knows that, while she preserves her integrity, she is sure of the divine protection, and that, though the enemy may bark, he cannot bite. All his threats are a jest, it is all but brutum fulmen—a mere flash.*

3. Those who abuse the people of God, affront God himself; and he takes what is said and done against them, as said and done against himself; "*Whom hast thou reproached? Even the Holy One of Israel; whom thou hast therefore reproached, because he is a Holy One.*" And it aggravated the indignity Sennacherib did to God, that he not only reproached him himself, but set his servants on to do it; *By thy servants, the abjects, thou hast reproached me.*

4. Those who boast of themselves and their own achievements, reflect upon God and his providence; "*Thou hast said, I have digged, and drunk water. I have done mighty feats, and will do more;*" and wilt not own that *I have done it, v. 24, 26.* The most active men are no more than God makes them, and God makes them no more than of old he designed to make them; "*What I have formed of ancient times, in an eternal counsel, now have I brought to pass,*" (for God does all according to the counsel of his will,) "*that thou shouldest be to waste defended cities; it is therefore intolerable arrogance to make it thine own doing.*"

5. All the malice, and all the motions and projects, of the church's enemies, are under the cognizance and check of the church's God. Sennacherib was active and quick, here, and there, and every where, but God knew his going out and coming in, and had always an eye upon him, *v. 28.* And that was not all; he had a hand upon him too, a strict hand, a strong hand, *a hook in his nose, and a bridle in his lips,* with which, though he was very headstrong and unruly, he could and would turn him back by the way he came, *v. 29.* Hitherto he shall come, and no further. God had signed Sennacherib's commission against Judah, (*ch. x. 6.*) here he supersedes it; he has frightened them but he must not hurt them, and therefore is discharged from going any further; nay, his commitment is here signed, by which he is clapped up, to answer for what he had done beyond his commission.

6. God is his people's bountiful Benefactor, as well as their powerful Protector; both a Sun and a Shield to those who trust in him. Jerusalem shall be defended, (*v. 35.*) the besiegers shall not come into it, no, nor come before it, with any regul-r at-

tack, but they shall be routed before they begin the siege, *v. 33.* But this is not all; God will return in mercy to his people, and will do them good. Their land shall be more than ordinarily fruitful, so that their losses shall be abundantly repaired; they shall not feel any of the ill effects either of the enemy's wasting the country, or of their own being taken off from husbandry. But the earth, as at first, shall bring forth of itself, and they shall live, and live plentifully, upon its spontaneous productions. The blessing of the Lord can, when he pleases, make rich without the hand of the diligent. And let them not think that the desolations of their country would excuse them from observing the sabbatical year, which happened (as it should seem) the year after, and when they were not to plough or sow; no, though they had not now their usual stock beforehand for that year, yet they must religiously observe it, and depend upon God to provide for them. God must be trusted in the way of duty.

7. There is no standing before the judgments of God, when they come with commission. (1.) The greatest numbers cannot stand before them; one angel shall, in one night, lay a vast army of men dead upon the spot, when God commissions him so to do, *v. 36.* Here are 185,000 brave soldiers in an instant turned into so many dead corpses. Many think the 76th Psalm was penned upon occasion of this defeat; where, from the *spoiling of the stout-hearted*, and sending them to sleep their long sleep, (*v. 5.*) it is inferred that God is *more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey*, (*v. 4.*) and that *he, even he, is to be feared, v. 7.* Angels are employed, more than we are aware of, as ministers of God's justice, to punish the pride, and break the power, of wicked men. (2.) The greatest men cannot stand before them. *The great king, the king of Assyria*, looks very little, when he is forced to return, not only with shame, because he cannot accomplish what he had projected with so much assurance, but with terror and fear, lest the angel that had destroyed his army should destroy him; yet he is made to look less, when his own sons, who should have guarded him, sacrificed him to his idol, whose protection he sought, *v. 37, 38.* God can quickly stop their breath, who breathe out threatenings and slaughter against his people, and will do it, when they have filled up the measure of their iniquity; and the Lord is known by these judgments which he executes, known to be a God that resists the proud. Many prophecies were fulfilled in this providence; which should encourage us, as far as they look further, and are designed as common and general assurances of the safety of the church and of all that trust in God, to depend upon God for the accomplishment of them. He that has delivered, doth and will. Lord, forgive our enemies; but, *so let all thine enemies perish, O Lord.*

## CHAP. XXXVIII.

This chapter proceeds in the history of Hezekiah. Here is, I. His sickness, and the sentence of death he received within himself, *v. 1.* II. His prayer in his sickness, *v. 2, 3.* III. The answer of peace which God gave to that prayer, assuring him that he should recover, that he should live 15 years yet, that Jerusalem should be delivered from the king of Assyria, and that, for a sign to confirm his faith herein, the sun should go back ten degrees, *v. 4-8.* And this we read and opened before, 2 Kings xx. 1, &c. But, IV. Here is Hezekiah's thanksgiving for his recovery, which we had not before, *v. 9-20.* To which are added, the means used, (*v. 21.*) and the end the good man aimed at in desiring to recover, *v. 22.* This is a chapter which will entertain the thoughts, direct the devotions, and encourage the faith and hopes, of those that are confined by bodily distempers. It visits those that are visited with sickness.

1. **I**N those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet, the

son of Amoz, came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thy house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live. 2. Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, 3. And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done *that which is good in thy sight*: and Hezekiah wept sore. 4. Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying, 5. Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. 6. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. 7. And this *shall be a sign unto thee from the LORD*, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken; 8. Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.

We may hence observe, among others, these good lessons:

1. That neither men's greatness nor their goodness will exempt them from the arrests of sickness and death. Hezekiah, a mighty potentate on earth, and a mighty favourite of Heaven, is struck with a disease, which, without a miracle, will certainly be mortal; and this, in the midst of his days, his comforts, and usefulness. *Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.* It should seem, this sickness seized him when he was in the midst of his triumphs over the ruined army of the Assyrians, to teach us always to rejoice with trembling.

2. It concerns us to prepare, when we see death approaching; "*Set thy house in order*, and thy heart especially; put both thine affections and thine affairs into the best posture thou canst, that, when thy Lord comes, thou mayest be found of him in peace with God, with thy own conscience, and with all men, and mayest have nothing else to do but to die." Our being ready for death will make it come never the sooner, but much the more easily: and those that are fit to die are most fit to live.

3. Is any afflicted with sickness? *Let him pray*, James v. 13. Prayer is a salve for every sore, personal or public; when Hezekiah was distressed by his enemies, he prayed; now that he was sick, he prayed. Whither should the child go, when any thing ails him, but to his Father? Afflictions are sent to bring us to our Bibles and to our knees. When Hezekiah was in health, he *went up to the house of the Lord*, to pray, for that was then the house of prayer. When he was sick in bed, *he turned his face toward the wall*; probably, toward the temple, which was a type of Christ, to whom we must look by faith in every prayer.

4. The testimony of our consciences for us, that by the grace of God we have lived a good life, and have walked closely and humbly with God, will be a great support and comfort to us when we come to look death in the face. And though we may not depend upon it as our righteousness, by which to be justified before God, yet we may humbly plead it as an evidence of our interest in the righteousness of

the Mediator. Hezekiah does not demand a reward from God for his good services, but modestly begs that God would remember, not how he had reformed the kingdom, taken away the high-places, cleansed the temple, and revived neglected ordinances; but, which was *better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices*, how he had approved himself to God with a single eye and an honest heart, not only in these eminent performances, but in an even regular course of holy living; *I have walked before thee in truth and sincerity, and with a perfect*, that is, an upright, heart; for uprightness is our gospel-perfection.

5. God has a gracious ear open to the prayers of his afflicted people. The same prophet that was sent to Hezekiah with warning to prepare for death, is sent to him with a promise that he shall not only recover, or be restored to a confirmed state of health, but live fifteen years yet. As Jerusalem was distressed, so Hezekiah was diseased, that God might have the glory of the deliverance of both, and that prayer too might have the honour of being instrumental in the deliverance. When we pray in our sickness, though God send not to us such an answer as he here sent to Hezekiah, yet, if by his Spirit he bids us be of good cheer, assures us that our sins are forgiven us, that his grace shall be sufficient for us, and that, whether we live or die, we shall be his, we have no reason to say that we pray in vain. God answers us, if he *strengthen us with strength in our souls*, though not with bodily strength, Ps. cxxxviii. 3.

6. A good man cannot take much comfort in his own health and prosperity, unless withal he see the welfare and prosperity of the church of God. Therefore God, knowing what lay near Hezekiah's heart, promised him not only that he should live, but that he should *see the good of Jerusalem all the days of his life*, (Ps. cxxviii. 5.) otherwise he cannot live comfortably. Jerusalem, which is now delivered, shall still be defended from the Assyrians, who perhaps threatened to rally again, and renew the attack. Thus does God graciously provide to make Hezekiah upon all accounts easy.

7. God is *willing to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel*, that they may have an unshaken faith in it, and therewith a strong consolation. God has given Hezekiah repeated assurances of his favour; and yet, as if all were thought too little, that he might expect from him uncommon favours, a sign is given him, an uncommon sign—none that we know of having had an absolute promise of living a certain number of years to come, as Hezekiah had. God thought fit to confirm this unprecedented favour with a miracle. The sign was the going back of the shadow upon the sundial: the sun is a faithful measurer of time, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race; but he that set that clock agoing can set it back, when he pleases, and make it to return; for the Father of all lights is the Direction of them.

9. The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness: 10. I said, in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years. 11. I said, I shall not see the LORD, *even the LORD*, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. 12. Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life, he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day *even* to night wilt thou make an

end of me. 13. I reckoned till morning, *hah*, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day *even* to night wilt thou make an end of me. 14. Like a crane, or a swallow, so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail *with looking upward*: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me. 15. What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done *it*: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul. 16. O LORD, by these *things men live*, and in all these *things is* the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live. 17. Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but thou hast in love to my soul *delivered it* from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. 18. For the grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. 19. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I *do* this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth. 20. The LORD *was ready* to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments, all the days of our life, in the house of the LORD. 21. For Isaiah had said, Let them take a hump of figs, and lay *it* for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover. 22. Hezekiah also had said, What *is* the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?

We have here Hezekiah's thanksgiving-song, which he penned, by divine direction, after his recovery. He might have taken some of the psalms of his father David, and have made use of them for his purpose; he might have found many very pertinent ones. He appointed the *Levites to praise the Lord with the words of David*, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. But the occasion here was extraordinary, and, his heart being full of devout affections, he would not confine himself to the compositions he had, though of divine inspiration, but would offer up his affections in his own words, which is most natural and genuine. He put this thanksgiving in writing, that he might review it himself afterward, for the reviving of the good impressions made upon him by this providence, and that it might be recommended to others also for their use upon the like occasion. Note, There are writings which it is proper for us to draw up after we have been sick and are recovered. It is good to write a memorial of the affliction, and of the frame of our hearts under it; to keep a record of the thoughts we had of things when we were sick, the affections that were then working in us; to write a memorial of the mercies of a sick bed, and of our release from it, that they may never be forgotten; to write a thanksgiving to God, write a sure covenant with him, and seal it; give it under our hands, that we will never return again to folly. It is an excellent writing which Hezekiah here left, upon his recovery; and yet we find (2 Chron. xxxii. 25.) that he *rendered not again according to the benefit done to him*. The impressions, one would have thought, should never have worn off, and yet, it seems, they did. Thanksgiving is good, but *thanksgiving is better*.

VOL. IV.—Y

Now, in this writing, he preserves upon record,

I. The deplorable condition he was in when his disease prevailed, and his despair of recovery, v. 10—13. He tells us what his thoughts were of himself, when he was at the worst; and these he keeps in remembrance; 1. As blaming himself for his despondency, and that he gave up himself for gone; whereas, while there is life, there is hope, and room for our prayer and God's mercy. Though it is good to consider sickness as a summons to the grave, so as thereby to be quickened in our preparation for another world, yet we ought not to make the worst of our case, nor to think that every sick man must needs be quickly a dead man. He that brings low, can raise up. Or, 2. As reminding himself of the apprehensions he had of death approaching, that he might always know and consider his own frailty and mortality, and that, though he had a reprieve for fifteen years, it was but a reprieve, and the fatal stroke he had now such a dread of would certainly come at last. Or, 3. As magnifying the power of God in recovering him when his case was desperate, and his goodness in being so much better to him than his own fears. Thus David sometimes, when he was delivered out of trouble, reflected upon the black and melancholy conclusions he had made upon his own case when he was in trouble, and what he had then *said in his haste*, as Ps. xxxi. 22.—lxxvii. 7—9.

Let us see what Hezekiah's thoughts of himself were:

(1.) He reckoned that the number of his months was cut off in the midst: he was now about thirty-nine or forty years of age, and when he had a fair prospect of many years and happy ones, very happy, very many, before him. This distemper that suddenly seized him, he concluded would be the *cutting off his days*; that he should now be *deprived of the residue of his years*, which, in a course of nature, he might have lived; not which he could command as a debt due to him, but which he had reason to expect, considering the strength of his constitution: and with them he should be deprived not only of the comforts of life, but of all the opportunities he had of serving God and his generation. To the same purport, (v. 12.) "*Mine age is departed and gone, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent, out of which I am forcibly dislodged by the pulling of it down in an instant.*" Our present residence is but like that of a shepherd in his tent, a poor, mean, and cold lodging, where we are upon duty, and with a trust committed to our charge, as the shepherd has, of which we must give an account, and which will easily be taken down by the drawing of one pin or two. But observe, It is not the final period of our age, but only the removal of it to another world, where the tents of Kedar that are taken down, coarse, black, and weather-beaten, shall be set up again in the New Jerusalem, *comely as the curtains of Solomon*. He adds another similitude; *I have cut off, like a weaver, my life*. Not that he did by any act of his own cut off the thread of his life; but, being told that he must needs die, he was forced to cut off all his designs and projects, *his purposes were broken off*, even the *thoughts of his heart*, as Job's were, ch. xvii. 11. Our days are compared to the weaver's shuttle, (Job vii. 6.) passing and repassing very swiftly, every throw leaving a thread behind it; and when they are finished, the thread is cut off, and the piece taken out of the loom, and showed to our Master, to be judged of whether it be well woven or no, that we may *receive according to the things done in the body*. But, as the weaver, when he has cut off his threads, has done his work, and the toil is over, so a good man, when his life is cut off, his cares and fatigues are cut off with it, and he rests from his labours. But

did I say, *I have cut off my life?* No, my times are not in mine own hand, they are in God's hand, and it is he that *will cut me off from the thrum;* so the margin reads it; he has appointed what shall be the length of the piece, and, when it comes to that length, he will cut it off.

(2.) He reckoned that he should go to the gates of the grave; to the grave, the gates of which are always open; for it is still crying, *Give, give.* The grave is here put not only for the sepulchres of his fathers, in which his body would be deposited with a great deal of pomp and magnificence, (for he was buried in the chief of the sepulchres of the kings, and all *Judah did him honour at his death,* 2 Chron. xxxii. 33.) which yet he himself took no care of, nor gave any order about, when he was sick; but for the state of the dead, that is the *sheol*, the *hades*, the invisible world, to which he saw his soul going.

(3.) He reckoned that he was deprived of all the opportunities he might have had of worshipping God, and doing good, in the world; (v. 11.) "*I said,*" [1.] "*I shall not see the Lord,* as he manifests himself in his temple, in his oracles and ordinances, even the Lord here in the land of the living." He hopes to see him on the other side death, but he despairs of seeing him any more on this side death, as he had seen him in the sanctuary, Ps. lxxiii. 2. He shall no more see, (serve) the Lord in the land of the living, the land of conflict between his kingdom and the kingdom of Satan, this seat of war. He dwells much upon this; *I shall no more see the Lord, even the Lord;* for a good man wishes not to live for any other end than that he may serve God, and have communion with him. [2.] *I shall see man no more.* He shall see his subjects no more, whom he may protect, and administer justice to; shall see no more objects of charity, whom he may relieve; shall see his friends no more, who were often sharpened by his countenance, as iron is by iron. Death puts an end to conversation, and removes our acquaintance into darkness, Ps. lxxxviii. 18.

(4.) He reckoned that the agonies of death would be very sharp and severe; "*He will cut me off with pining sickness,* which will waste me, and wear me off, quickly." The distemper increased so fast, without intermission or remission, either day or night, morning or evening, that he concluded it would soon come to a crisis, and make an end of him—that God, whose servants all diseases are, would by them, as a lion, break all his bones with grinding pain, v. 13. He thought that next morning was the utmost he could expect to live in such pain and misery; when he had outlived the first day's illness, the second day he repeated his fears, and concluded that this must needs be his last night; *From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.* When we are sick, we are very apt to be thus calculating our time, and, after all, we are still at uncertainty. It should be more our care how we shall get safe to another world, than how long we are likely to live in this world.

II. The complaints he made in this condition; (v. 14.) "*Like a crane, or swallow, so did I chatter;* I made a noise as those birds do when they are frightened." See what a change sickness makes in a little time; he that, but the other day, spake with so much freedom and majesty, now, through the extremity of pain, or deficiency of spirits, *chatters like a crane, or swallow.* Some think he refers to his praying in his affliction; it was so broken and interrupted with groanings which could not be uttered, that it was more like the chattering of a crane, or a swallow, than what it used to be. Such mean thoughts had he of his own prayers, which were yet acceptable to God, and successful. He mourned like a dove, sadly, but silently and patiently. He

had found God so ready to answer his prayers at other times, that he could not but look upward, in expectation of some relief now; but in vain, his eyes failed, and he saw no hopeful symptom, nor felt any abatement of his distemper; and therefore he prays, "*I am oppressed,* quite overpowered, and ready to sink; *Lord, undertake for me,* bail me out of the hands of the serjeant that has arrested me; *be Surety for thy servant for good,* Ps. cxix. 122. Come between me and the gates of the grave, to which I am ready to be hurried." When we recover from sickness, the divine pity does, as it were, beg a day for us, and undertakes we shall be forthcoming another time, and answer the debt in full. And when we receive the sentence of death within ourselves, we are undone, if the divine grace do not undertake for us to carry us through the valley of the shadow of death, and to preserve us blameless to the heavenly kingdom on the other side of it—if Christ do not undertake for us, to bring us off in the judgment, and present us to his Father, and to do all that for us, which we need, and cannot do for ourselves, *I am oppressed, ease me;* so some read it; for when we are agitated by a sense of guilt, and the fear of wrath, nothing will make us easy but Christ's undertaking for us.

III. The grateful acknowledgment he makes of God's goodness to him in his recovery. He begins this part of writing as one at a stand how to express himself; (v. 15.) "*What shall I say?* Why should I say so much by way of complaint, when this is enough to silence all my complaints—He has spoken unto me, he has sent his prophet to tell me that I shall recover, and live fifteen years yet; and himself has done it, it is as sure to be done as if it were done already; what God has spoken he will himself do, for no word of his shall fall to the ground." God having spoken it, he is sure of it; (v. 16.) "*Thou wilt recover me, and make me to live;* not only recover me from this illness, but make me to live through the years assigned me." And having this hope,

1. He promises himself always to retain the impressions of his affliction; (v. 15.) "*I will go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul;* as one in sorrow for my sinful distrusts and murmurings under my affliction; as one in care to make suitable returns for God's favour to me, and to make it appear that I have got good by the providences I have been under. *I will go softly,* gravely, and considerably, and with thought and deliberation, not as many, who, when they are recovered, live as carelessly, and as much at large, as ever." Or, "*I will go pleasantly;* (so some understand it;) "when God has delivered me, I will walk cheerfully with him in all holy conversation, as having tasted that he is gracious. Or, "*I will go softly,*" that is, "mournfully, in the bitterness of my soul for my sins." Or, "*I will go softly, even after the bitterness of my soul;*" (so it may be read;) "when the trouble is over, I will endeavour to retain the impression of it, and to have the same thoughts of things that I had then."

2. He will encourage himself, and others, with the experiences he had had of the goodness of God; (v. 16.) "*By these things which thou hast done for me, they live, the kingdom lives;*" (for the life of such a king was the life of the kingdom;) "all that hear of it shall live and be comforted; by the same power and goodness that have recovered me, all men have their souls held in life, and they ought to acknowledge it. *In all these things is the life of my spirit,* my spiritual life, that is supported and maintained by what God has done for the preservation of my natural life." The more we taste of the loving-kindness of God in every providence, the more will our hearts be enlarged to love him,

and live to him, and that will be the life of our spirit. Thus our souls live, and they shall praise him.

3. He magnifies the mercy of his recovery, on several accounts.

(1.) That he was raised up from great extremity; (v. 17.) *Behold, for peace I had great bitterness.* When upon the defeat of Sennacherib, he expected nothing but an uninterrupted peace to himself and his government, he was suddenly seized with sickness, which imbibited all his comforts to him, and went to that height, that it seemed to be the bitterness of death itself, *bitterness, bitterness*, nothing but gall and wormwood. This was his condition, when God sent him seasonable relief.

(2.) That it came from the love of God, from love to his soul. Some are spared, and rerieved, in wrath, that they may be reserved for some greater judgment when they have filled up the measure of their iniquities; but temporal mercies are *then* sweet indeed to us, when we can taste the love of God in them; he *delivered me because he delighted in me*; (Ps. xviii. 19.) and the word here signifies a very affectionate love; *Thou hast loved my soul from the pit of corruption*; so it runs in the original. God's love is sufficient to bring a soul from the pit of corruption. This is applicable to our redemption by Christ; it was in love to our souls, our poor perishing souls, that he delivered them from the bottomless pit, snatched them as brands out of everlasting burnings. *In his love, and in his pity he redeemed us*; and the preservation of our bodies, and the provision made for them, are *then* doubly comfortable, when it is in love to our souls; when God repairs the house because he has a kindness for the inhabitant.

(3.) That it was the effect of the pardon of sin; *For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back*, and thereby *hast delivered my soul from the pit of corruption*, in love to it. Note, [1.] When God pardons sin, he casts it behind his back, as not designing to look upon it with an eye of justice and jealousy; he remembers it no more, to visit for it; the pardon does not make the sin not to have been, or not to have been sin, but not to be punished as it deserves. When we cast our sins behind our back, and take no care to repent of them, God sets them before his face, and is ready to reckon for them; but when we set them before our face in true repentance, as David did when his sin was ever before him, God casts them behind his back. [2.] When God pardons sins, he pardons all, casts them all behind his back, though they have been as scarlet and crimson. [3.] The pardoning of the sin is the delivering of the soul from the pit of corruption.

[4.] It is *then* pleasant to think of recoveries from sickness, when we see them flowing from the remission of sin; then the cause is removed, and then it is in love to the soul.

(4.) That it was the lengthening out of his opportunity to glorify God in this world; which he made the business and pleasure and end of life.

[1.] If this sickness had been his death, it had put a period to that course of service for the glory of God, and the good of the church, which he now was pursuing, v. 18. Heaven indeed praises God, and the souls of the faithful, when at death they remove thither, do that work of heaven as angels, and with the angels, there; but what is this world the better for that? What does that contribute to the support and advancement of God's kingdom among men in this state of struggle? The grave cannot praise God, nor the dead bodies that lie there; death cannot celebrate him, cannot proclaim his perfections and favours, to invite others into his service. *They who go down to the pit*, being no longer in a state of probation, nor living by faith in

his promises, cannot give him honour by hoping for his truth. They that lie rotting in the grave, as they are not capable of receiving any further mercy from God, so neither are they capable of offering any more praises to him, till they shall be raised at the last day, and then they shall both receive and give glory.

[2.] Being recovered from it, he resolves not only to proceed, but to abound, in praising and serving God; (v. 19.) *The living, the living, he shall praise thee.* They may do it, they have an opportunity of praising God; and that is the main thing that makes life valuable and desirable to a good man. Hezekiah was *therefore* glad to live, not that he might continue to enjoy his royal dignity, and the honour and pleasure of his late successes, but that he might continue to praise God. The living must praise God; they live in vain, if they do not. They that have been dying, and yet are living, whose life is from the dead, are in a special manner obliged to praise God, as being most sensibly affected with his goodness. Hezekiah for his part, being recovered from this sickness, will make it his business to praise God; *I do it this day*, let others do it in like manner." They that give good exhortations should set good examples, and do themselves what they expect from others; "For my part," says Hezekiah, *"the Lord was ready to save me*; he not only did save me, but he was ready to do it, just then when I was in the greatest extremity; his help came in seasonably; he showed himself willing and forward to save me; *the Lord was to save me*; was at hand to do it, saved me at the first word; and therefore,"

*First*, "I will publish and proclaim his praise. I and my family, I and my friends, I and my people, will have a concert of praise to his glory; *we will sing my song to the stringed instruments*, that others may attend to them, and be affected with them, when they are in the most devout and serious frame in the house of the Lord." It is for the honour of God, and the edification of his church, that special mercies should be acknowledged in public praises, especially mercies to public persons, Ps. cxvi. 18, 19.

*Secondly*, "I will proceed and persevere in his praises." We should do it all the days of our life, because every day of our life is itself a fresh mercy, and brings many fresh mercies along with it; and as renewed mercies call for renewed praises, so former eminent mercies call for repeated praises. It is by the mercy of God that we live, and therefore as long as we live, we must continue to praise him, while we have breath, nay while we have being.

*Thirdly*, "I will propagate and perpetuate his praises." We should not only do it all the days of our life, but *the father to the children should make known his truth*, that the ages to come may give God the glory of his truth by trusting to it. It is the duty of parents to possess their children with a confidence in the truth of God, which will go far toward keeping them close to the ways of God. Hezekiah, doubtless, did this himself, and yet Manasseh his son walked not in his steps. Parents may give their children many good things, good instructions, good examples, good books, but they cannot give them grace.

In the two last verses of this chapter, we have two passages relating to this story, which were omitted in the narrative of it here, but which we had, 2 Kings xx. and therefore shall here only observe two lessons from them.

1. That God's promises are intended not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, the use of means; Hezekiah is sure to recover, and yet he must *take a lump of figs, and lay it on the boil*, v. 21. We do not trust God, but tempt him, if, when

we pray to him for help, we do not second our prayers with our endeavours. We must not put physicians, or physic, in the place of God, but make use of them in subordination to God and to his providence; help thyself, and God will help thee.

2. That the chief end we should aim at, in desiring life and health, is, that we may glorify God, and do good, and improve ourselves in knowledge, and grace, and meetness for heaven. Hezekiah, when he meant, *What is the sign that I shall recover?* asked, *What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord,* there to honour God, to keep up acquaintance and communion with him, and to encourage others to serve him, v. 22. It is taken for granted that if God would restore him to health, he would immediately go up to the temple with his thank-offerings; there Christ found the impotent man whom he had healed, John v. 14. The exercises of religion are so much the business and delight of a good man, that to be restrained from them is the greatest grievance of his afflictions, and to be restored to them is the greatest comfort of his deliverances. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee.

## CHAP. XXXIX.

The story of this chapter likewise we had before, 2 Kings xx. 12, &c. It is here repeated, not only as a very memorable and improvable passage, but because it concludes with a prophecy of the captivity in Babylon; and as the former part of the prophecy of this book frequently referred to Sennacherib's invasion and the defeat of that, to which therefore the history of that was very fitly subjoined, so the latter part of this book speaks much of the Jews' captivity in Babylon and their deliverance out of that, to which therefore the first prediction of it, with the occasion thereof, is very fitly prefixed. We have here, I. The pride and folly of Hezekiah, in showing his treasures to the king of Babylon's ambassadors that were sent to congratulate him on his recovery, v. 1, 2. II. Isaiah's examination of him, concerning it, in God's name, and his confession of it, v. 3, 4. III. The sentence passed upon him for it, that all his treasures should, in process of time, be carried to Babylon, v. 5-7. IV. Hezekiah's penitent and patient submission to this sentence, v. 8.

1. **A**T that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered. 2. And Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not. 3. Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, *even* from Babylon. 4. Then said he, What have they seen in thy house? And Hezekiah answered, All that *is* in my house have they seen; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them.

Hence we may learn these lessons,

1. That humanity and common civility teach us

to rejoice with our friends and neighbours when they rejoice, and to congratulate them on their deliverances, and particularly their recoveries from sickness. The king of Babylon, having heard that Hezekiah had been sick, and was recovered, sent to compliment him upon the occasion. If Christians be unneighbourly, heathens will shame them.

2. It becomes us to give honour to those whom our God puts honour upon. The sun was the Babylonians' god; and when they understood that it was with a respect to Hezekiah that the sun, to their great surprise, went back ten degrees, on such a day, they thought themselves obliged to do Hezekiah all the honour they could. Will all people thus walk in the name of their God, and shall not we?

3. Those that do not value good men for their goodness, may yet be brought to pay them great respect by other inducements, and for the sake of their secular interests. The king of Babylon made his court to Hezekiah here, not because he was pious, but because he was prosperous; as the Philistines coveted an alliance with Isaac, because they saw the Lord was with him, Gen. xxvi. 28. The king of Babylon was an enemy to the king of Assyria, and therefore was fond of Hezekiah, because the Assyrians were so much weakened by the power of his God.

4. It is a hard matter to keep the spirit low in the midst of great advancements. Hezekiah is an instance of it: he was a wise and good man; but when one miracle after another was wrought in his favour, he found it hard to keep his heart from being lifted up, nay a little thing then drew them into the snare of pride. Blessed Paul himself needed a thorn in the flesh, to keep him from being *lifted up with the abundance of revelations*.

5. We have need to watch over our own spirits, when we are showing our friends our possessions, what we have done, and what we have got, that we be not proud of them, as if our might or our merit had purchased and procured us this wealth. When we look upon our enjoyments, and have occasion to speak of them, it must be with humble acknowledgments of our own unworthiness, and thankful acknowledgments of God's goodness, with a just value for the achievements of others, and with an expectation of losses and changes; not dreaming that our mountain stands so strong but that it may soon be moved.

6. It is a great weakness for good men to value themselves much upon the civil respects that are paid them (yea, though there be something particular and uncommon in them,) by the children of this world, and to be fond of their acquaintance. What a poor thing was it for Hezekiah, whom God had so dignified, to be thus over-proud of the respect paid him by a heathen prince, as if those added any thing to him! We ought to return the courtesies of such with interest, but not to be proud of them.

7. We must expect to be called to an account for the workings of our pride, though they are secret, and in such instances as we thought there was no harm in; and therefore we ought to call ourselves to an account for them; and when we have had company with us, that have paid us respect, and been pleased with their entertainment, and commended every thing, we ought to be jealous over ourselves, with a godly jealousy, lest our hearts have been lifted up. As far as we see cause to expect that this sly and subtle sin of pride has insinuated itself into our breasts, and mingled itself with our conversation, let us be ashamed of it, and as Hezekiah here, ingenuously confess it, and take shame to ourselves for it.



5. Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord of hosts; 6. Behold, the days come, that all that *is* in thy house, and *that* which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. 7. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. 8. Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken: he said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

Hence let us observe,

1. That if God love us, he will humble us, and will find some way or other to pull down our spirits when they are lifted up above measure. A mortifying message is sent to Hezekiah, that he might be humbled for the pride of his heart, and be convinced of the folly of it; for though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, as he did Hezekiah here, *to prove him, that he might know all that was in his heart*, yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it.

2. It is just with God to take that from us, which we make the matter of our pride, and on which we build a carnal confidence. When David was proud of the numbers of his people, God took a course to make them fewer; and when Hezekiah boasts of his treasures, and looks upon them with too great a complacency, he is told that he acts like the foolish traveller, who shows his money and gold to one that proves a thief, and is thereby tempted to rob him.

3. If we could but see things that will be, we should be ashamed of our thoughts of things that are. If Hezekiah had known that the seed and successors of this king of Babylon would hereafter be the ruin of his family and kingdom, he would not have complimented his ambassadors as he did. And when the prophet told him that he would be so, we may well imagine how he was vexed at himself for what he had done. We cannot certainly foresee what will be, but are told, in general, *All is vanity*, and therefore it is vanity for us to take complacency, and put confidence, in any thing that goes under that character.

4. Those that are fond of an acquaintance and alliance with irreligious men, first or last will have enough of it, and will have cause to repent it. Hezekiah thought himself happy in the friendship of Babylon, though it was the mother of harlots and idolatries; but Babylon, who now courted Jerusalem, in process of time conquered her, and carried her captive. Leagues with sinners, and leagues with sin too, will end thus; it is therefore our wisdom to keep at a distance from them.

5. Those that truly repent of their sins will take it well to be reproved for them, and will be willing to be told of their faults. Hezekiah reckoned that word of the Lord good, which discovered sin to him, and made him sensible that he had done amiss, which before he was not aware of. The language of true penitents is, *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness*; and the law is therefore good, because, being spiritual, in it sin appears sin, and exceeding sinful.

6. True penitents will quietly submit, not only to the reproofs of the word, but to the rebukes of Providence, for their sins. When Hezekiah was told of the punishment of his iniquity, he said, *Good is the word of the Lord*, not only the mitigation of

the sentence, but the sentence itself; he has nothing to object against the equity of it, but says, *Amen*, to the threatening. They that see the evil of sin, and what it deserves, will justify God in all that is brought upon them for it, and own that he punishes them less than their iniquities deserve.

7. Though we must not be regardless of those that come after us, yet we must reckon ourselves well done for, if there be *peace and truth in our days*, and better than we had reason to expect; If a storm be coming, we must reckon it a favour to get into the harbour before it comes, and be gathered to the grave in peace; yet we can never be secure of this, but must prepare for changes in our own time, that we may stand complete in all the will of God, and bid it welcome, whatever it is.

## CHAP. XL.

At this chapter begins the latter part of the prophecy of this book, which is not only divided from the former by the historical chapters that come between, but seems to be distinguished from it in the scope and style of it. In the former part, the name of the prophet was frequently prefixed to the particular sermons, beside the general title; (as *ch. ii. 1. ch. vii. 3. ch. xiii. 1.*) but this is all one continued discourse, and the prophet not so much as once named. That consisted of many burthens, many woes; this of many blessings. There, the distress which the people of God were in by the Assyrian, and their deliverance out of that, were chiefly prophesied of; but that is here spoken of as a thing past, (*ch. lii. 4.*) and the captivity in Babylon, and their deliverance out of that, which were much greater events, of more extensive and abiding concern, are here largely foretold. Before God sent his people into captivity, he furnished them with precious promises for their support and comfort in their trouble; and we may well imagine of what great use to them the glorious, gracious light of this prophecy was, in that cloudy and dark day, and how much it helped to dry up their tears by the rivers of Babylon. But it looks further yet, and to greater things; much of Christ and gospel-grace we meet with in the foregoing part of this book, but in this latter part we shall find much more; and as if it were designed for a prophetic summary of the New Testament, it begins with that which begins the gospels, *The voice of one crying in the wilderness*, (*ch. xl. 3.*) and concludes with that which concludes the book of the Revelation, *The new heavens and the new earth*, *ch. lvi. 22.* Even Mr. White acknowledges, that as all the mercies of God to the Jewish nation bore some resemblance to those glorious things performed by our Saviour for man's redemption, so they are by the spirit of God expressed in such terms as show plainly, that while the prophet is speaking of the redemption of the Jews, he had in his thoughts a more glorious deliverance. And we need not look for any further accomplishment of these prophecies yet to come; for if Jesus be He, and his kingdom be it, that should come, we are to look for no other, but the carrying on and completing of the same blessed work which was begun in the first preaching and planting of Christianity in the world.

In this chapter, we have, I. Orders given to preach and publish the glad tidings of redemption, v. 1, 2. II. These glad tidings introduced by a voice in the wilderness, which gives assurance that all obstructions shall be removed; (v. 3..5.) and that though all creatures fail and fade, the word of God shall be established and accomplished, v. 6..8. III. A joyful prospect given to the people of God of the happiness which this redemption should bring along with it, v. 9..11. IV. The sovereignty and power of that God magnified, who undertakes to work out this redemption, v. 12..17. V. Idols therefore triumphed over, and idolaters upbraided with their folly, v. 18..26. VI. A reproof given to the people of God for their fears and despondencies, and enough said, in a few words, to silence those fears, v. 27..31. And we, through patience and comfort of this scripture, may have hope.

1. **C**OMFORT ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her

iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

We have here the commission and instructions given not to this prophet only, but, with him, to all the LORD's prophets, nay and to all Christ's ministers, to proclaim comfort to God's people. 1. This did not only warrant, but enjoin this prophet himself to encourage the good people who lived in his own time, who could not but have very melancholy apprehensions of things, when they saw Judah and Jerusalem by their daring impieties ripening apace for ruin, and God in his providence hastening ruin upon them. Let them be sure that, for all this, God had mercy in store for them. 2. It was especially a direction to the prophets that should live in the time of the captivity, when Jerusalem was in ruins; they must encourage the captives to hope for enlargement in due time. 3. Gospel-ministers, being employed by the blessed Spirit as comforters, and as helpers of the joy of Christians, are here put in mind of their business. Here we have,

(1.) Comfortable words directed to God's people in general, v. 1. The prophets have instructions from their God (for he is the *Lord God of the holy prophets*, Rev. xxii. 26.) to comfort the people of God; and the charge is doubled, *Comfort ye, comfort ye*—not because the prophets are unwilling to do it, (no, it is the most pleasant part of their work,) but because sometimes the souls of God's people refuse to be comforted, and their comforters must repeat things again and again, ere they can fasten any thing upon them. Observe here, [1.] There are a people in the world, that are God's people. [2.] It is the will of God that his people should be a comforted people, even in the worst of times. [3.] It is the work and business of ministers to do what they can for the comfort of God's people. [4.] Words of conviction, such as we had in the former part of this book, must be followed with words of comfort, such as we have here; for he that has torn will heal us.

(2.) Comfortable words directed to Jerusalem in particular; "*Speak to the heart of Jerusalem*; (v. 2.) speak that which will revive her heart, and be a cordial to her, and to all that belong to her and wish her well. Do not whisper it, but cry unto her: cry aloud, to show saints their comforts as well as to show sinners their transgressions; make her hear it:" [1.] "That the days of her trouble are numbered and finished; her warfare is accomplished, the set time of her servitude; the campaign is now at an end, and she shall retire into quarters of refreshment." Human life is a warfare, (Job vii. 1.) the Christian life much more; but the struggle will not last always, the warfare will be accomplished, and then the good soldiers shall not only enter into rest, but be sure of their pay. [2.] "That the cause of her trouble is removed, and, when that is taken away, the effect will cease. Tell her that her iniquity is pardoned, God is reconciled to her, and she shall no longer be treated as one guilty before him." Nothing can be spoken more comfortably than this, *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee*. Troubles are then removed in love, when sin is pardoned. [3.] "That the end of her trouble is answered; *She has received of the Lord double for the cure of all her sins*, sufficient, and more than sufficient, to part between her and her idols," the worship of which was the great sin for which God had a controversy with them, and from which he designed to reclaim them by their captivity in Babylon; and it had that effect upon them, it begat in them a rooted antipathy to idolatry, and was physic doubly strong for the purging out of that iniquity. Or, it may be taken as the lan-

guage of the divine compassion; *His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel*, (Judges x. 16.) and, like a tender father, *since he shake against them, he earnestly remembered them*, (Jer. xxxi. 20.) and was ready to say that he had given them too much correction. They, being very penitent, acknowledged that God had *punished them less than their iniquities deserved*; but he, being very pitiful, owned, in a manner, that he had punished them more than they deserved. True penitents have indeed, in Christ and his sufferings, *received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins*; for the satisfaction Christ made by his death was of such an infinite value, that it was more than double to the demerits of sin; for God spared not his own Son.

3. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: 5. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. 6. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: 7. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the Spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. 3. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

The time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, being come, the people of God must be prepared, by repentance and faith, for the favours designed them; and, in order to call them to both these, we have here *the voice of one crying in the wilderness*; which may be applied to those prophets who were with the captives in their wilderness-state, and who, when they saw the day of their deliverance dawn, called earnestly upon them to prepare for it, and assured them that all the difficulties which stood in the way of their deliverance should be got over. It is a good sign that mercy is preparing for us, if we find God's grace preparing us for it, Ps. x. 17. But it *must* be applied to John the Baptist; for though God was the Speaker, he was *the voice of one crying in the wilderness*, and his business was, to *prepare the way of the Lord*, to dispose men's minds for the reception and entertainment of the gospel of Christ. *The way of the Lord is prepared*,

1. By repentance for sin; that was it which John Baptist preached to all Judah and Jerusalem, (Matt. iii. 2, 5.) and thereby *made ready a people prepared for the Lord*, Luke i. 17. The alarm is given, let all take notice of it at their peril; God is coming in a way of mercy, and we must prepare for him, v. 3—5. If we apply it to their captivity, it may be taken as a promise, that, whatever difficulties lie in their way, when they return they shall be removed. This voice in the wilderness (divine power going along with it) sets pioneers on work to level the roads. But it may be taken as a call to duty, and it is the same duty that we are called to, in preparation for Christ's entrance into our souls.

1. We must get into such a frame of spirit as will dispose us to receive Christ and his gospel; "*Prepare ye the way of the Lord*; prepare yourselves for him, and let all that be suppressed which would be an obstruction to his entrance; make room for

Christ; *Make straight a highway for him.*" If he prepare the end for us, we ought surely to prepare the way for him. Prepare for the Saviour; *lift up your heads, O ye gates,* Ps. xxiv. 7, 8. Prepare for the salvation, the great salvation, and other lesser deliverances. Let us get to be fit for them, and then God will work them out. Let us not stand in our own light, nor put a bar in our own door, but find, or make, a highway for him, even in that which was desert ground. This is that for which he waits to be gracious.

2. We must get our hearts levelled by divine grace. Those that were hindered from comfort in Christ by their dejections and despondencies, are the valleys that must be exalted. Those that are hindered from comfort in Christ by a proud conceit of their own merit and worth, are the mountains and hills that must be made low. Those that have entertained prejudices against the word and ways of God, that are intractable, and disposed to thwart and contradict even that which is plain and easy, because it agrees not with their corrupt inclinations and secular interests, are the crooked that must be made straight, and the rough places that must be made plain. Let but the gospel of Christ have a fair hearing, and it cannot fail of acceptance. This prepares the way of the Lord; and thus God will by his grace prepare his own way in all the vessels of mercy, whose heart he opens as he did Lydia's.

And when this is done, *the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,* v. 5. (1.) When the captives are prepared for deliverance, Cyrus shall proclaim it, and they shall have the benefit of it, and they only, whose hearts the Lord shall stir up with courage and resolution to break through the discouragements that lay in their way, and to make nothing of the hills, and valleys, and all the rough places. (2.) When John Baptist has for some time preached repentance, mortification, and reformation, and so made ready a people prepared for the Lord, (Luke i. 17.) then the Messiah himself shall be revealed in his glory, working miracles, which John did not; and by his grace, which is his glory, binding up and healing with consolations those whom John had wounded with convictions. And this revelation of divine glory shall be *a light to lighten the Gentiles; All flesh shall see it together,* and not the Jews only; they shall see and admire it, see it, and bid it welcome; as the return out of captivity was taken notice of by the neighbouring nations, Ps. cxxvi. 3. And it shall be the accomplishment of the word of God, not one *iota*, or tittle of which shall fall to the ground; *The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it,* and therefore the hand of the Lord will effect it.

11. By confidence in the word of the Lord, and not in any creature: *the mouth of the Lord having spoken it,* the voice has this further to cry, (he that has ears to hear, let him hear it,) *The word of our God shall stand for ever,* v. 8.

1. By this accomplishment of the prophecies and promises of salvation, and the performance of them to the utmost in due time, it appears that the word of the Lord is sure, and what may be safely relied on. Then we are prepared for deliverance, when we depend entirely upon the word of God, build our hopes on that, with an assurance that it will not make us ashamed: in a dependence upon this word, we must be brought to own that all flesh is grass, withering and fading. (1.) The power of man, when it does appear against the deliverance, is not to be feared; for it shall be as grass before the word of the Lord, it shall wither and be trodden down: the insulting Babylonians, who promise themselves that the desolations of Jerusalem shall be perpetual, are but as grass which the Spirit of the Lord blows upon, makes nothing of, but blasts all its glory; for the word of the Lord, which promises

their deliverance, shall stand for ever, and it is not in the power of their enemies to hinder the execution of it. (2.) The power of man, when it would appear for the deliverance, is not to be trusted to; for it is but as grass in comparison with the word of the Lord, which is the only firm foundation for us to build our hope upon. When God is about to work salvation for his people, he will take them off from depending upon creatures, and looking for it from hills and mountains; they shall fail them, and their expectations from them shall be frustrated, *the Spirit of the Lord shall blow upon them;* for God will have no creature to be a rival with him for the hope and confidence of his people; and as it is his word only that shall stand for ever, so in that word only our faith must stand. When we are brought to this, then, and not till then, we are fit for mercy.

2. The word of our God, that glory of the Lord, which is now to be revealed, the gospel, and that grace which is brought with it to us, and wrought by it in us, shall stand for ever; and this is the satisfaction of all believers, when they find all their creature-comforts withering and fading like grass. Thus the apostle applies it to the word which by the gospel is preached unto us, and which lives and abides for ever as the incorruptible seed by which we are born again, 1 Pet. i. 23—25. To prepare the way of the Lord we must be convinced, (1.) Of the vanity of the creature; that all flesh is grass, weak and withered; we ourselves are so, and therefore cannot save ourselves; all our friends are so, and therefore are unable to save us. All the beauty of the creature, which might render it amiable, is but as the flower of grass, soon blasted, and therefore cannot recommend us to God and to his acceptance. We are dying creatures, all our comforts in this world are dying comforts, and therefore cannot be the felicity of our immortal souls; we must look further for a salvation, look further for a portion. (2.) Of the validity of the promise of God; we must be convinced that the word of the Lord can do that for us, which all flesh cannot; that forasmuch as it stands for ever, it will furnish us with a happiness that will run parallel with the duration of our souls, which must live for ever; for the things which are not seen, but must be believed, are eternal.

9. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength: lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! 10. Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. 11. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

It was promised, (v. 5.) that *the glory of the Lord shall be revealed;* that is it, with the hopes of which God's people must be comforted. Now here we are told,

I. How it shall be revealed, v. 9. 1. It shall be revealed to Zion and Jerusalem; notice shall be given of it to the remnant that are left in Zion and Jerusalem, the poor of the land, who were vine-dressers and husbandmen; it shall be told them that their brethren shall return to them; this shall be told also to the captives who belonged to Zion and Jerusalem, and retained their affection for them; Zion is said to *dwell with the daughter of Babylon,*

Zech. ii. 7. And there she receives notice of Cyrus's gracious proclamation; and so the margin reads it, *O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, &c.* meaning the persons who were employed in publishing that proclamation; let them do it with a good will, let them make the country ring of it, and let them tell it to the sons of Zion in their own language, *Saying to them, Behold your God.* 2. It shall be published by Zion and Jerusalem; so the text reads it; they that remain there, or that were already returned, when they find the deliverance proceeding toward perfection, let them proclaim it in the most public places, whence they may be best heard by all the cities of Judah; let them proclaim it as loud as they can, let them *lift up their voice with strength*, and not be afraid of overstraining themselves; let them not be afraid lest the enemy should hear it, and quarrel with them, or lest it should not prove true, or not such good tidings as at first it appeared; let them say to the cities of Judah, and all the inhabitants of the country, *Behold your God.* When God is going on with the salvation of his people, let them industriously spread the news among their friends, let them tell them that it is God that has done it; whoever were the instruments, God was the Author; it is *their* God, a God in covenant with them, and he does it as theirs, and they will reap the benefit and comfort of it. "Behold him, take notice of his hand in it, and look above second causes; behold, the God you have long looked for, is come at last; (*ch. xxv. 9.*) *This is our God, we have waited for him.*" This may refer to the invitation which was sent forth from Jerusalem to the cities of Judah, as soon as they had set up an altar, immediately upon their return out of captivity, to come and join with them in their sacrifices, Ezra iii. 2-4. "When the worship of God is set up again, send notice of it to all your brethren, that they may share with you in the comfort of it." But this was to have its full accomplishment in the apostles' public and undaunted preaching of the gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. The voice crying in the wilderness gave notice that he was *coming*; but now notice is given that he is *come*. Behold the Lamb of God; take a full view of your Redeemer. Behold your King, behold your God.

11. What that glory is, which shall be revealed. Your God will come, will show himself,

1. With the power and greatness of a Prince; (*v. 10.*) *He will come with strong hand*, too strong to be obstructed, though it may be opposed. His strong hand shall subdue his people to himself, and shall restrain and conquer his and their enemies. *He* will come, who is strong enough to break through all the difficulties that lie in his way. Our Lord Jesus was full of power, a mighty Saviour. Some read it, *He will come against the mighty one*, and overpower him, overcome him. Satan is the strong man armed; but our Lord Jesus is stronger than he; and he shall make it to appear that he is so, for, (1.) *He shall reign*, in defiance of all opposition; *his arm shall rule*, shall overrule, *for him*, for the fulfilling of his counsels, to his own glory; for he is his own End. (2.) *He shall recompense to all according to their works*, as a righteous Judge; *his reward is with him*; he brings along with him, as a returning Prince, punishments for the rebels, and preferments for his loyal subjects. (3.) *He shall proceed and accomplish his purposes*; *his work is before him*, he knows perfectly well what he has to do, which way to go about it, and how to compass it; *he himself knows what he will do*.

2. With the pity and tenderness of a Shepherd, *v. 11.* God is the *Shepherd of Israel*; (*Ps. lxxx. 1.*) Christ is the good Shepherd, John x. 11. The same that rules with the strong hand of a Prince, leads and feeds with the kind hand of a Shepherd. (1.)

He takes care of all his flock, the little flock; *he shall feed his flock like a shepherd*. His word is food for his flock to feed on, his ordinances fields for them to feed in; his ministers are under-shepherds that are appointed to attend them. (2.) He takes particular care of those that most need his care; the lambs that are weak, and cannot help themselves, and are unaccustomed to hardship; and *those that are with young*, that are therefore heavy, and, if any harm be done them, are in danger of casting their young. He particularly takes care for a succession, that they may not fail or be cut off. The good Shepherd has a tender care for children, that are towardly and hopeful; for young converts, that are setting out in the way to heaven; for weak believers, and those that are of a sorrowful spirit. These are the lambs of his flock, that shall be sure to want nothing that their case requires. [1.] *He will gather them in the arms of his power*; his strength shall be made *perfect in their weakness*, 2 Cor. xii. 9. He will gather them in when they wander, gather them up when they fall, gather them together when they are dispersed, and gather them home to himself at last; and all this, with his own arm, out of which none shall be able to pluck them, John x. 28. [2.] *He will carry them in the bosom of his love*, and cherish them there. When they tire or are weary, are sick and faint, when they meet with foul ways, he will carry them on, and take care they be not left behind. [3.] *He will gently lead them*. By his word he requires no more service, and by his providence he inflicts no more trouble, than he will enable them for; for he considers their frame.

12. Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? 13. Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or, *being* his counsellor, hath taught him? 14. With whom took he counsel, and *who* instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding? 15. Behold, the nations *are* as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. 16. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. 17. All nations before him *are* as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity.

The scope of these verses is to show what a great and glorious being the Lord Jehovah is, who is Israel's God and Saviour. It comes in here, (1.) To encourage his people that were captives in Babylon to hope in him, and to depend upon him for deliverance, though they were ever so weak, and their oppressors ever so strong. (2.) To engage them to cleave to him, and not to turn aside after other gods; for there are none to be compared with him. (3.) To possess all those who receive the glad tidings of redemption by Christ, with a holy awe and reverence of God. Though it was said, (*v. 9.*) *Behold your God*, and (*v. 11.*) that *he shall feed his flock like a shepherd*; yet these condescensions of his grace must not be thought of with any diminution

to the transcendencies of his glory. Let us see how great our God is, and fear before him, for,

1. His power is unlimited, and what no creature can compare with, much less contend with, *v. 12.* (1.) He has a vast reach; view the celestial globe, and you are astonished at the extent of it; but the great God *metes the heavens with a span*; to him they are but a hand-breadth, so large-handed is he. View the terraqueous globe, and he has the command of that too; all the waters in the world he can *measure in the hollow of his hand*, where we can hold but a little water; and the dry land he easily manages, for he *comprehends the dust of the earth in a measure*; or with his three fingers; it is no more to him than a pugil, or that which we take up between our thumb and two fingers. (2.) He has a vast strength, and can as easily move mountains and hills as the tradesman heaves his goods into the scales and out of them again; he poises them with his hand as exactly as if he weighed them in a pair of balances. This may refer to the work of creation, when the heavens were stretched out as exactly as that which is spanned; and the earth and waters put together in just proportion, as if they had been measured; and the mountains made of such a weight as to serve for ballast to the globe, and no more. Or, it may refer to the work of providence, (which is a continued creation,) and the consistency of all the creatures with each other.

2. His wisdom is unsearchable, and what no creature can give either information or direction to, *v. 13, 14.* As none can do what God has done, and does, so none can assist him in the doing of it, or suggest any thing to him which he thought not of. When the Lord by his Spirit made the world, (Job xxvi. 13.) there was none that directed his Spirit, or gave him any advice, either what to do, or how to do it. Nor does he need any counsellor to direct him in the government of the world, nor is there any with whom he consults, as the wisest kings do with them that *know law and judgment*, Esther i. 13. God needs not to be told what is done, for he knows it perfectly; nor needs he be advised concerning what is to be done, for he knows both the right end and the proper means. This is much insisted upon here, because the poor captives had no politicians among them to manage their concerns at court, or to put them in a way of gaining their liberty; "No matter," says the prophet, "you have a God to act for you, who needs not the assistance of statesmen." In the great work of our redemption by Christ, matters were concerted *before the world*, when there were none to *teach God in the path of judgment*, 1 Cor. ii. 7.

3. The nations of the world are nothing in comparison of him, *v. 15, 17.* Take them all together, all the great and mighty nations of the earth, kings the most pompous, kingdoms the most populous, both the most wealthy; take the isles, the multitude of them, the isles of the Gentiles—before him, when they stand in competition with him, or in opposition to him, they are as a drop of the bucket compared with the vast ocean, or the small dust of the balance, which does not serve to turn it, and therefore is not regarded, it is so small in comparison with all the dust of the earth. He takes them up, and throws them away from him, as a very little thing, not worth speaking of. They are all in his eye as nothing, as if they had no being at all; for they add nothing to his perfection and all-sufficiency; they are counted by him, and are to be counted by us, in comparison of him, less than nothing, and vanity; when he pleases, he can as easily bring them all into nothing as at first he brought them out of nothing. When God has work to do, he values not either the assistance or the resistance of any creature. They are all *vanity*; the word

that is used for the chaos, (Gen. i. 2.) to which they will at last be reduced. Let this beget in us high thoughts of God, and low thoughts of this world, and engage us to make God, and not man, both our Fear and our Hope. This magnifies God's love to the world, that, though it is of such small account and value with him, yet, for the redemption of it, *he gave his only-begotten Son*, John iii. 16.

4. The services of the church can make no addition to him, nor do they bear any proportion to his infinite perfections; (*v. 16.*) *Lebanon is not sufficient to burn*: not the wood of it to be for the fuel of the altar, though it be so well stocked with cedars; nor the beasts of it to be for sacrifices, though it be so well stocked with cattle, *v. 16.* Whatever we honour God with, it falls infinitely short of the merit of his perfection; for he is exalted *far above all blessing and praise* all burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

18. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? 19. The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. 20. He that is so impoverished, that he hath no oblation, chooseth a tree that will not rot: he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved. 21. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? 22. *It is* he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof *are* as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in; 23. That bringeth the princes to nothing: he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. 24. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. 25. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. 26. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these *things*, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that *he is* strong in power; not one faileth.

The prophet here reproves those, 1. Who represented God by creatures, and so changed his truth into a lie, and his glory into shame; who made images, and then said that they resembled God, and paid their homage to them accordingly. 2. Who put creatures in the place of God, who feared them more than God, as if they were a match for him, or loved them more than God, as if they were fit to be rivals with him. Twice the challenge is here made, *To whom will ye liken God?* *v. 18.* and again, *v. 25.* The Holy One himself says, *To whom will ye liken me?* This shows the folly and absurdity. (1.) Of corporal idolatry, making visible images of him who is invisible, imagining the image to be animated by the Deity, and the Deity to be presented by

the image; which, as it was an instance of the corruption of the human nature, so it was an intolerable injury to the honour of the divine nature. (2.) Of spiritual idolatry, making creatures equal with God in our affections. Proud people make themselves equal with God; covetous people make their money equal with God; and, whatever we esteem or love, fear or hope in, more than God, that creature we equal with God, which is the highest affront imaginable to him who is *God over all*.

Now, to show the absurdity of this;

I. The prophet describes idols as despicable things, and worthy of the greatest contempt; (v. 19, 20.) "Look upon the better sort of them, which rich people set up, and worship; they are made of some base metal, cast into what shape the founder pleases, and that is gilded, or overlaid with plates of gold, that it may pass for a golden image. It is a creature; for the workman made it, (*therefore it is not God*, Hos. viii. 6.) it depended upon his will whether it should be a god at all, and of what shape it should be. It is a cheat; for it is gold on the outside, but within it is lead or copper; in this indeed representing the deities, that they were not what they seemed to be, and deceived their admirers. How despicable then are the worst sort of them—the poor men's gods! He that is so impoverished, that he has scarcely a sacrifice to offer to his god when he has made him, will yet not be without an enshrined deity of his own. And though he cannot procure one of brass or stone, he will have a wooden one rather than none, and for that purpose chooses a tree that will not soon rot, and of that he will have his graven image made; both agree to have their image well fastened, that they may not be robbed of it. The better sort have silver chains to fix theirs with; and though it be but a wooden image, care is taken that it shall not be moved." Let us pause a little, and see, 1. How these idolaters shame themselves, and what a reproach they put upon their own reason, in dreaming that gods of their own making, *Nehushtans*, pieces of brass, or logs of wood, should be able to do them any kindness. Thus vain were they in their imaginations; and how was their foolish heart darkened! 2. See how these idolaters shame us, who worship the only living and true God; they spared no cost upon their idols, we grudge that as waste which is spent in the service of our God; they took care they should not be moved, we wilfully provoke our God to depart from us.

II. He describes God as infinitely great, and worthy of the highest veneration; so that between him and idols, whatever competition there may be, there is no comparison. To prove the greatness of God, he appeals,

1. To what they had *heard of him by the hearing of the ear*, and the consent of all ages and nations concerning him; (v. 21.) "Have ye not known by the very light of nature? Has it not been told you by your fathers and teachers, according to the constant tradition received from their ancestors and predecessors, even from the beginning?" (Those notices of God are as ancient as the world.) "Have ye not understood it as always acknowledged from the foundation of the earth, that God is a great God, and a great King above all gods?" It has been a truth universally admitted, that there is an Infinite Being, who is the Fountain of all being. This is understood not only ever since the beginning of the world, but from and by the origin of the universe; it is founded upon the foundation of the earth; the invisible things of God are *clearly seen from the creation of the world*, Rom. i. 20. Thou mayest not only ask thy father, and he shall tell thee this, and thine elders; (Deut. xxxii. 7.) but *ask them that go by the way*, (Job xxi. 29.) ask the first man you meet, and he will say the same. Some read it,

*Will ye not know? Will ye not hear?* For, those that are ignorant of this are willingly ignorant; the light shines in their faces, but they shut their eyes against it.

Now that which is here said of God, is,

(1.) That he has the command of all the creatures; the heaven and the earth themselves are under his management; he sits upon the circle, or globe of the earth, v. 22. He that has the special residence of his glory in the upper world, maintains a dominion over this lower world, gives law to it, and directs all the motions of it to his own glory; he sits undisturbed upon the earth, and so establishes it. He is still stretching out the heavens, his power and providence keep them still stretched out, and will do so till the day comes that they shall be rolled together like a scroll. He spreads them out as easily as we draw a curtain to and fro, opening these curtains in the morning, and drawing them close again at night. And the heaven is to this earth as a tent to dwell in; it is a canopy drawn over our heads, *Et quod tegit omnia cælum—It encircles all*. Ovid. Ps. civ. 2.

(2.) That the children of men, even the greatest and mightiest, are as nothing before him. The numerous inhabitants of this earth are, in his eye, as grasshoppers in ours, so little and inconsiderable, of such small value, and of such little use, and so easily crushed. Proud men lifting up themselves is but like the grasshopper's leap; in an instant they must down to the earth again. If the spies thought themselves grasshoppers before the sons of Anak, (Numb. xiii. 38.) what are we before the great God? Grasshoppers live but awhile, and live carelessly, not like the ant; so do the most of men.

(3.) That those who appear and act against him, how formidable soever they may be to their fellow-creatures, will certainly be humbled and brought down by the mighty hand of God, v. 23, 24. Princes and judges, who have great authority, and abuse it to the support of oppression and injustice, make nothing of those about them; *as for all their enemies, they puff at them*; (Ps. x. 5.—xii. 5.) but when the great God takes them to task, he brings them to nothing; he humbles them, and tames them, and makes them as vanity; little regarded, neither feared nor loved. He makes them utterly unable to stand before his judgments; which shall either, [1.] Prevent their settlement in their authority; *They shall not be planted, they shall not be sown*; and those are the two ways of propagating plants, either by seed or slips. Nay, if they should gain a little interest, and so be planted or sown, yet *their stock shall not take root in the earth*, they shall not continue long in power. Eliphaz saw the foolish taking root, but *suddenly cursed their habitation*. And then how soon is the fig-tree withered away! Or, [2.] He will blast them when they think they are settled; he does but *blow upon them*, and then *they shall wither*, and come to nothing, and the *whirlwind shall take them away as stubble*. For God's wrath, though it seem, at first, to blow slightly upon them, will soon become a mighty whirlwind; when God judges, he will overcome. Those that will not bow before him cannot stand before him.

2. He appeals to what *their eyes saw of him*; (v. 26.) "*Lift up your eyes on high*; be not always poring on this earth," (*O curvæ in terras animæ et cælestium inanes!*—*Degenerate minds, that can bend so toward the earth, having nothing celestial in them!*) "but sometimes look up," (*Os homini sublimè dedit, cælumque tueri jussit*—*Heaven gave to man an erect countenance, and bade him gaze on the stars*;) "behold the glorious lights of heaven, consider who has created them. They neither made nor marshalled themselves, doubtless, therefore, there is a God that gave them their being, power



and motion." What we see of the creature should lead us to the Creator. The idolaters, when they lifted up their eyes, and beheld the hosts of heaven, being wholly immersed in sense, looked no further, but worshipped them, Deut. iv. xix. Job xxxi. 26. Therefore the prophet here directs us to make use of our reason as well as our senses, and to consider who created them, and to pay our homage to him. Give him the glory of his sovereignty over them; he brings out their host by number, as a general draws out the squadrons and battalions of his army; of the knowledge he has of them; he calls them all by names, proper names, according as their place and influence are; (Ps. cxlvii. 4.) and of the use he makes of them; when he calls them out to any service, so obsequious are they, that, by the greatness of his might, not one of them fails, but as when the stars in their courses fought against Sisera, every one does that to which he is appointed. To make these creatures therefore rivals with God, which are such ready servants to him, is an injury to them as well as an affront to him.

27. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? 28. Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary! there is no searching of his understanding. 29. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. 30. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 31. But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.

Here,

1. The prophet reproves the people of God, who are now supposed to be captives in Babylon, for their unbelief and distrust of God, and the dejections and despondencies of their spirit under their affliction; (v. 27.) "*Why sayest thou, O Jacob, to thyself, and to those about thee, My way is hid from the Lord? Why dost thou make hard and melancholy conclusions concerning thyself, and thy present case, as if the latter were desperate?*" 1. The titles he here gives them were enough to shame them out of their distrusts; *O Jacob, O Israel!* Let them remember whence they took those names—from one who had found God faithful to him, and kind in all his straits; and why they bore these names—as God's professing people, a people in covenant with him. 2. The way of reproving them is by reasoning with them; "*Why? Consider whether thou hast any ground to say so.*" Many of our foolish frets, and foolish fears, would vanish before a strict inquiry into the causes of them. 3. That which they are reproved for, is, an ill-natured, ill-favoured word they spake of God, as if he had cast them off. There seems to be an emphasis laid upon their saying it; *Why sayest thou, and speakest thou?* It is bad to have evil thoughts rise in our mind, but it is worse to put an *imprimatur* to them, and turn them into evil words. David reflects with regret upon what he said in his haste, when he was in distress. 4. The ill word they said was a word of despair concerning their present calamitous condition. They were ready to conclude, (1.) That God would not heed them; "*My way is hid from the*

*Lord;* He takes no notice of our straits, nor concerns himself any more in our concerns. There are such difficulties in our case, that even divine wisdom and power will be nonplussed." A man whose way is hid, is one whom God has hedged in, Job iii. 23. (2.) That God could not help them; "*My judgment is passed over from my God;* my case is past relief, so far past it, that God himself cannot redress the grievances of it: *our bones are dried,* Ezek. xxxvii. 11.

II. He reminds them of that which, if duly considered, was sufficient to silence all those fears and distrusts: for their conviction, as before for the conviction of idolaters, (v. 21.) he appeals to what they had known, and what they had heard. Jacob and Israel were a knowing people, or might have been, and their knowledge came by hearing; for Wisdom cried in their chief places of concourse. Now, among other things, they had heard that God had spoken once, twice, yea many a time they had heard it, *That power belongs unto God,* Ps. lxii. 11. That is,

1. He is himself an almighty God. He must needs be so, for he is *the everlasting God, even Jehovah.* He was from eternity, he will be to eternity; and therefore with him there is no deficiency, no decay. He has his being of himself, and therefore all his perfections must needs be boundless. He is without beginning of days or end of life, and therefore with him there is no change. He is also *the Creator of the ends of the earth,* of the whole earth, and all that is in it from end to end. He therefore is the rightful Owner and Ruler of all, and must be concluded to have an absolute power over all, and an all-sufficiency to help his people in their great straits. Doubtless, he is still as able to save his church as he was at first to make the world: (1.) He has wisdom to contrive the salvation, and that wisdom is never at a loss; *There is no searching out of his understanding,* so as to countermine the counsels of it, and defeat its intentions; no, nor so as to determine what he will do, for he has ways by himself, ways in the sea. None can say, "*Thus far God's wisdom can go, and no further;* for, when we know not what to do, he knows. (2.) He has power to bring about the salvation, and that power is never exhausted; *He faints not, nor is weary;* he upholds the whole creation, and governs all the creatures, and is neither tired nor toiled; and therefore, no doubt, he has power to relieve his church, when it is brought ever so low, without weakness or weariness.

2. He gives strength and power to his people, and helps them, by enabling them to help themselves. He that is the strong God, is the Strength of Israel.

(1.) He can help the weak, v. 29. Many a time he gives power to the faint; to them that are ready to faint away, and to them that have no might, he not only gives, but increases strength, as there is more and more occasion for it. Many out of bodily weakness are wonderfully recovered, and made strong, by the providence of God: and many that are feeble in spirit, timorous and faint-hearted, unable for services and sufferings, are yet strengthened by the grace of God *with all might in the inward man.* To them who are sensible of their weakness, and ready to acknowledge they have no might, God does in a special manner increase strength; for, *when we are weak* in ourselves, then are we strong in the Lord.

(2.) He will help the willing; will help those who, in a humble dependence upon him, help themselves, and will do well for those who do their best, v. 30, 31. Those who trust to their own sufficiency, and are so confident of that, that they neither exert themselves to the utmost, nor seek unto God for his grace, are the youths, and the young men, who are

strong, but are apt to think themselves stronger than they are. And they shall faint and be weary, yea they shall utterly fail in their services, in their conflicts, and under their burthens; they shall soon be made to see the folly of trusting to themselves. But they who wait on the Lord, who make conscience of their duty to him, and by faith rely upon him, and commit themselves to his guidance; they who do so, God will not fail them. [1.] They shall have grace sufficient for them: they shall renew their strength as their work is renewed, as there is new occasion; they shall be anointed, and their lamps supplied, with fresh oil; God will be their *arm every morning*, ch. xxxiii. 2. If at any time they have been foiled and weakened, they shall recover themselves, and so renew their strength. Heb. *They shall change their strength*, as their work is changed; doing work, suffering work; they shall have strength to labour, strength to wrestle, strength to resist, strength to bear. As the day, so shall the strength be. [2.] They shall use this grace for the best purposes. Being strengthened, *First*, They shall soar upward, upward toward God; *They shall mount up with wings like eagles*; so strongly, so swiftly, high and heaven-ward. In the strength of divine grace, their souls shall ascend above the world, and even enter into the holiest. Pious and devout affections are the eagles' wings, on which gracious souls *mount up*, Ps. xxv. i. *Secondly*, They shall press forward, forward toward heaven; they shall walk, they shall run, the way of God's commandments, cheerfully and with alacrity, *they shall not be weary*; constantly and with perseverance, *they shall not faint*; and therefore in due season they shall reap. Let Jacob and Israel therefore, in their greatest distresses, continue waiting upon God, and not despair of timely and effectual relief and succour from him.

## CHAP. XLI.

This chapter, as the former, is intended both for the conviction of idolaters, and for the consolation of all God's faithful worshippers; for the Spirit is sent, and ministers are employed by him, both to convince and to comfort. And however this might be primarily intended for the conviction of Babylonians, and the comfort of Israelites, or for the conviction of those in Israel that were addicted to idolatry, as multitudes were, and the comfort of those that kept their integrity, doubtless it was intended both for admonition and encouragement to us; admonition to keep ourselves from idols, and encouragement to trust in God. Here, I. God by the prophet shows the folly of those that worshipped idols, especially that thought their idols able to contest with him, and control him, v. 1..9. II. He encourages his faithful ones to trust in him, with an assurance that he would take their part against their enemies, make them victorious over them, and bring about a happy change of their affairs, v. 10..20. III. He challenges the idols, that were rivals with him for men's adoration, to vie with him either for knowledge or power; either to show things to come, or to do good or evil, v. 21..29. So that the chapter may be summed up in those words of Elijah, *If Jehovah be God, then follow him; but if Baal be God, then follow him*; and in the people's acknowledgment, upon the issue of the trial, *Jehovah he is the God, Jehovah he is the God*.

I. **K**EEP silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near, then let them speak; let us come near together to judgment. 2. Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. 3. He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had

not gone with his feet. 4. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he. 5. The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came. 6. They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. 7. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheneth with the hammer, him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved. 8. But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. 9. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

That particular instance of God's care for his people Israel, in raising up Cyrus to be their deliverer, is here insisted upon as a great proof both of his sovereignty above all idols, and of his power to protect his people. Here is,

I. A general challenge to the worshippers and admirers of idols, to make good their pretensions, in competition with God, and opposition to him, v. 1. It is renewed, (v. 21.) *Produce your cause*. The court is set, summonses are sent to the islands that lay most remote, but not out of God's jurisdiction, for he is the *Creator and Possessor of the ends of the earth*, to make their appearance and give their attendance. Silence (as usual) is proclaimed while the cause is in trying; "Keep silence before me, and judge nothing before the time:" while the cause is in trying between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, it becomes all people silently to expect the issue; not to object against God's proceedings, but to be confident that he will carry the day. The defenders of idolatry are called to say what they can in defence of it; "*Let them renew their strength*, in opposition to God, and see whether it be equal to the strength which they renew that wait upon him; (ch. xl. 31.) let them try their utmost efforts, whether by force of arms, or force of argument. *Let them come near*; they shall not complain that God's *dread makes them afraid*, (Job. xiii. 21.) so that they cannot say what they have to say, in vindication and honour of their idols; no, *let them speak freely, let us come near together to judgment*." Note, 1. The cause of God and his kingdom is not afraid of a fair trial; if the case be but fairly stated, it will be surely carried in favour of religion. 2. The enemies of God's church and his holy religion may safely be challenged to say and do their worst for the support of their unrighteous cause. He that *sits in heaven, laughs at them*, and the *daughter of Zion despises them*, for *great is the truth, and will prevail*.

II. He particularly challenges the idols to do that for their worshippers, and against his, which he had done, and would do, for his worshippers, and against theirs. Different senses are given of v. 2. concerning the righteous man raised up from the east; and since we cannot determine which is the true, we will make use of each as good. That which is to be proved, is, 1. That *the Lord is God alone, the first, and with the last*, (v. 4.) that he is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable; that he governed the world from the beginning, and will to the end of time. He has reigned of old, and will reign

for ever; the counsels of his kingdom were from eternity, and the continuance of it will be to eternity. 2. That *Israel is his servant*, (v. 8.) whom he owns and protects, and employs, and in whom he is, and will be, glorified. As there is a God in heaven, so there is a church on earth, that is his particular care. Elijah prays, (1 Kings xviii. 36.) *Let it be known that thou art God, and that I am thy servant*. Now, to prove this, he shows,

(1.) That it was he who called Abraham, the father of this despised nation, out of an idolatrous country, and by many instances of his favour made his name great, Gen. xii. 2. He is the *righteous man whom God raised up from the east*. Of him the Chaldee Paraphrase expressly understands it, *who brought Abraham publicly from the east*? To maintain the honour of the people of Israel, it was very proper to show what a figure this great ancestor of theirs made in his day; and v. 8. seems to be the explication of it, where God calls Israel *the seed of Abraham my friend*; and v. 4. he calls the generations, namely, the generations of Israel, *from the beginning*. Also, to put contempt upon idolatry, and particularly the Chaldean idolatry, it was proper to show how Abraham was called from serving other gods; (Josh. xxiv. 2, 3, &c.) so that an early testimony was borne against that idolatry which boasted so much of its antiquity. Also, to encourage the captives in Babylon to hope that God would find a way for their return to their own land, it was proper to remind them how at first he brought their father Abraham out of the same country into this land, to give it him for an inheritance, Gen. xv. 7.

Now observe what is here said concerning him; [1.] That he was a *righteous man, or righteousness, a man of righteousness, that believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness*; and so he became the father of all those who by faith in Christ are made the *righteousness of God through him*, Rom. iv. 3, 11. 2 Cor. v. 21. He was a great example of righteousness in his day, and taught his household to do judgment and justice, Gen. xviii. 19. [2.] That God raised him up from the east, from Ur first, and afterward from Haran, which lay east from Canaan. God would not let him settle in either of those places, but did by him as the eagle by her young, when she stirs up her nest: he raised him out of iniquity, and made him pious; out of obscurity, and made him famous. [3.] He called him to his foot, to follow him with an implicit faith; for he went out, not knowing whither he went, but whom he followed, Heb. xi. 8. Those whom God effectually calls, he calls to his foot; to be subject to him, to attend him, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes; and we must all either come to his foot, or be made his footstool. [4.] He gave nations before him, the nations of Canaan, which he promised to make him master of; and thus far gave him an interest in, that the Hittites acknowledged him a mighty prince among them, Gen. xxiii. 6. He made him rule over those kings whom he conquered for the rescue of his brother Lot, Gen. xiv. And when God gave them as dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow, that is, made them an easy prey to his catechised servants, he then pursued them, and passed safely, or in peace, under the divine protection, though it was in a way he was altogether unacquainted with; and so considerable was this victory, that Melchizedec himself appeared to celebrate it. Now who did this but the great Jehovah? Can any of the gods of the heathen do so?

(2.) That it is he who will, ere long, raise up Cyrus from the east. It is spoken of according to the language of prophecy as a thing past, because as sure to be done in its season as if it were already done. God will raise him up in righteousness; so it may be read; (ch. xlv. 13.) will call him to his

foot; make what use of him he pleases, make him victorious over the nations that oppose his coming to the crown, and give him success in all his wars; and he shall be a type of Christ, who is Righteousness itself, the Lord our Righteousness, whom God will, in the fulness of time, raise up, and make victorious over the powers of darkness; so that he shall spoil them, and make a show of them openly.

III. He exposes the folly of idolaters, who, notwithstanding the convincing proofs which the God of Israel had given of his being God alone, obstinately persisted in their idolatry, nay, were so much the more hardened in it; (v. 5.) *The isles of the Gentiles saw this*; not only what God did for Abraham himself, but what he did for his seed, for his sake; how he brought them out of Egypt, and made them rule over kings, and they feared, Exod. xv. 14.—16. They were afraid, and, according to the summons, (v. 1.) they drew near, and came; they could not avoid taking notice of what God did for Abraham and his seed; but, instead of helping to reason one another out of their sottish idolatries, they helped to confirm one another in them, v. 6, 7. 1. They looked upon it as a dangerous design upon their religion, which they were jealous for the honour of, and were resolved, right or wrong, to adhere to, and therefore were alarmed to appear vigorously for the support of it, as the Ephesians for their Diana. When God, by his wonderful appearances on the behalf of his people, went about to wrest their idols from them, they held them so much the faster, and said one to another, "*Be of good courage*, let us unanimously agree to keep up the reputation of our gods." Though Dagon fell before the ark, he shall be set up again in his place; one tradesman encourages another to come into a confederacy for the keeping up the noble craft of god-making. Thus men's convictions often exasperate their corruptions, and they are made worse both by the word and the works of God, which should make them better. 2. They looked upon it as a dangerous design upon themselves; they thought themselves in danger from the growing greatness both of Abraham that was a convert from idolatry, and of the people of Israel that were separatists from it; and therefore they not only had recourse to their old gods for protection, but made new ones, Deut. xxxii. 17. So the carpenter, having done his part to the timber-work, encouraged the goldsmith to do his part in gilding or overlaying it; and when it came into the goldsmith's hand, he that smoothes with the hammer, that polishes it, or beats it thin, quickened him that smote the anvil, bade him be expeditious, and told him it was ready for the soldering; which perhaps was the last operation about it, and then it is fastened with nails, and you have a god of it presently. Do sinners thus hearten and quicken one another in the ways of sin? And shall not the servants of the living God both stir up one another to, and strengthen one another in, his service? Some read all this ironically, and by way of permission; *Let them help every one his neighbour, let the carpenter encourage the goldsmith*; but all in vain, idols shall fall for all this.

IV. He encourages his own people to trust in him; (v. 8, 9.) "*But thou, Israel, art my servant*. They know me not, but thou knowest me, and knowest better than to join with such ignorant besotted people as these;" (for it is intended for a warning to the people of God not to walk in the way of the heathen;) "they put themselves under the protection of these impotent deities, but thou art under my protection: they that make them are like unto them, and so is every one that trusts in them; but thou, O Israel, art the servant of a better Master." Observe what is suggested here for the encouragement of God's people, when they are threatened and in

sulted over. 1. They are God's servants, and he will not see them abused, especially for what they do in his service; *Thou art my servant*, (v. 8.) and *"I have said unto thee, Thou art my servant; and I will not go back from my word."* 2. He has chosen them to be a peculiar people to himself; they were not forced upon him, but of his own good will he set them apart. 3. They were the seed of Abraham his friend; it was the honour of Abraham that he was *called the friend of God*, (James ii. 23.) whom God covenanted and conversed with as a friend, and the *man of his counsel*; and *this honour have all the saints*, John xv. 15. And for the father's sake the people of Israel were beloved. God was pleased to look upon them as the posterity of an old friend of his, and therefore to be kind to them; for the covenant of friendship was made with Abraham and his seed. 4. He had sometimes, when they had been scattered among the heathen, fetched them from the ends of the earth, and taken them out of the hands of the chief ones thereof, and therefore he would not now abandon them. Abraham their father was fetched from a place at a great distance, and they in his loins; and those who had been thus far-fetched and dear-bought, he could not easily part with. 5. He had not yet cast them away, though they had often provoked him, and therefore he would not now abandon them. What God has done for his people, and what he has further engaged to do, should encourage them to trust in him at all times.

10. Fear thou not; for *I am* with thee; be not dismayed, for *I am* thy God: *I will* strengthen thee; yea, *I will* help thee; yea, *I will* uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. 11. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. 12. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, *even* them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of naught. 13. For *I the LORD* thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; *I will* help thee. 14. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, *and* ye men of Israel; *I will* help thee, saith the LORD, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. 15. Behold, *I will* make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat *them* small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. 16. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, *and* shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel. 17. *When* the poor and needy seek water, and *there is* none, *and* their tongue faileth for thirst, *I the LORD* will bear them, *I the God of Israel* will not forsake them. 18. *I will* open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: *I will* make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. 19. *I will* plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah-tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree; *I*

will set in the desert the fir-tree, *and* the pine, and the box-tree together; 20. That they may see and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

The scope of these verses is to silence the fears, and encourage the faith, of the servants of God in their distresses; perhaps it is intended, in the first place, for the support of God's Israel, in captivity; but all that faithfully serve God, *through patience and comfort of the scripture, may have hope*. And it is addressed to Israel as a single person, that it might the more easily and readily be accommodated and applied by every Israelite indeed to himself. That is a word of caution, counsel, and comfort, which is so often repeated, *Fear thou not*; and again, (v. 13.) *Fear not*, and (v. 14.) *"Fear not, thou worm Jacob; fear not the threatenings of the enemy, doubt not the promises of thy God; fear not that thou shalt perish in thine affliction, or that the promise of thy deliverance shall fail."* It is against the mind of God, that his people should be a timorous people.

For the suppressing of fear, he assures them, I. That they may depend upon his presence with them as their God, and a God all-sufficient for them in the worst of times. Observe with what tenderness God speaks, and how willing he is to let the heirs of promise know the immutability of his counsel, and how desirous to make them easy, *"Fear thou not, for I am with thee; not only within call, but present with thee; be not dismayed at the power of those that are against thee, for I am thy God, and engaged for thee. Art thou weak? I will strengthen thee. Art thou destitute of friends? I will help thee in the time of need. Art thou ready to sink, ready to fall? I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness, that right hand which is full of righteousness, in dispersing rewards and punishments,"* Ps. xlviii. 10. And again, (v. 13.) it is promised, 1. That God will strengthen their hands—will help them; *"I will hold thy right hand, go hand in hand with thee;"* so some: he will take us by the hand as our Guide, to lead us in our way, will help us up when we are fallen, or prevent our falls; when we are weak, he will hold us up, wavering, he will fix us, trembling, he will encourage us, and so *hold us by the right hand*, Ps. lxxiii. 23. 2. That he will silence their fears, *saying unto thee, Fear not*. He has said it again and again in his word, and has there provided sovereign antidotes against fear; but he will go further, he will by his Spirit say it to their hearts, and make them to hear it, and so will help them.

II. That though their enemies be now very formidable, insolent, and severe, yet the day is coming when God will reckon with them, and they shall triumph over them. There are those that are incensed against God's people, that *strive with them*, (v. 11.) that war against them, (v. 12.) that hate them, that seek their ruin, and are continually picking quarrels with them. But let not God's people be incensed at them, nor strive with them, nor render evil for evil; but wait God's time, and believe, 1. That they shall be convinced of the folly, at least, if not of the sin, of striving with God's people; and, finding it to no purpose, *they shall be ashamed and confounded*, which *might* bring them to repentance, but will rather fill them with rage. 2. That they shall be quite ruined and undone; (v. 11.) *They shall be as nothing* before the justice and power of God. When God comes to deal with his proud enemies, he makes nothing of them; or, they shall be brought to nothing, shall be as if they had

never been. This is repeated; (v. 12.) they shall be *as nothing*, and *as a thing of naught*; or, as that which is gone and has failed. They that were formidable shall become despicable; that fancied they could do any thing, shall be able to bring nothing to pass; that made a figure in the world, and a mighty noise, shall become mere ciphers, and be buried in silence; they shall perish, not only be nothing, but be miserable. *Thou shalt seek them*; shalt inquire what is become of them, that they do not appear as usual, but thou shalt not find them, as David, (Ps. xxxvii. 36.) *I sought him, but he could not be found*.

III. That they themselves should become a terror to those who were now a terror to them, and victory should turn on their side, v. 14.—16. See here, 1. How Jacob and Israel are reduced, and brought very low. It is the *worm Jacob*; so little, so weak, and so defenceless, despised and trampled on by every body, forced to creep even into the earth for safety; and we must not wonder that Jacob is become a worm, when even Jacob's King calls himself *a Worm, and no man*, Ps. xxii. 6. God's people are sometimes as worms in their humble thoughts of themselves, and their enemies' haughty thoughts of them; worms, but not vipers, as their enemies are—not of the serpent's seed. God regards Jacob's low estate, and says, "*Fear not, thou worm Jacob*; fear not that thou shalt be crushed; and *ye men of Israel*," (*ye few men*, so some read it, *ye dead men*, so others,) "*do not give up yourselves for gone notwithstanding*." Note, The grace of God will silence fears, even then when there seems to be the greatest cause for them; *perplexed, but not in despair*. 2. How Jacob and Israel are *arid* need from this low estate, and made as formidable as ever they had been; despicable. But *by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?* We are here told, *I will help thee, saith the Lord*; and it is the honour of God to help the weak. He will help them, for he is their Redeemer, who is wont to redeem them, who has undertaken to do it. Christ is the Redeemer, from him is our help found. He will help them, for he is the *Holy One of Israel*, worshipped among them in the beauty of holiness, and engaged by promise to them. The Lord will help them by enabling them to help themselves, and making Jacob to become a threshing instrument. Observe, He is but an instrument, a tool in God's hand, that he is pleased to make use of; and he is an instrument of God's making, and is no more than God makes him. But if God make him a threshing instrument, he will make use of him, and therefore will make him fit for use, new and sharp, and having teeth, or sharp spikes; and then, by divine direction and strength, *thou shalt thresh the mountains*, the highest and strongest and most stubborn of thine enemies; thou shalt not only beat them, but *beat them small*; they shall not be as corn threshed out, which is valuable, and is carefully preserved, (such God's people are when they are under the flail, (ch. xxi. 10.) *O my threshing, yet the corn of my floor*, that shall not be lost,) but these are made as chaff, which is good for nothing, and which the husbandman is glad to get rid of. He pursues the metaphor, v. 16. Having threshed them, thou shalt winnow them, and the wind shall scatter them. This perhaps had its accomplishment, in part, in the victories of the Jews over their enemies in the times of the Maccabees; but it seems in general designed to read the final doom of all the implacable enemies of the church of God, and to have its accomplishment likewise in the triumphs of the cross of Christ, the gospel of Christ, and all the faithful followers of Christ, over the powers of darkness, which, first or last, shall all be dissipated, and in Christ all believers shall be more than con-

querors, and *he that overcomes shall have power over the nations*, Rev. ii. 26.

IV. That, hereupon, they shall have abundance of comfort in God, and God shall have abundance of honour from them; *Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord*, v. 16. When we are freed from that which hindered our joy, and are blessed with that which is the matter of it, we ought to remember that God is our exceeding joy, and in him all our joys terminate. When we rejoice over our enemies, we must rejoice in the Lord, for to him alone we owe our liberties and victories. "*Thou shalt also glory in the Holy One of Israel*, in thine interest in him, and relation to him, and what he has done for thee." And if thus we make God our Praise and Glory, we become to him for a praise and a glory.

V. That they shall have seasonable and suitable supplies of every thing that is proper for them in the time of need; and if there be occasion, God will again do for them as he did for Israel in their march from Egypt to Canaan, v. 17.—19. When the captives, either in Babylon, or in their return thence, are in distress for want of water or shelter, God will take care of them, and one way or other, make their journey, even through a wilderness, comfortable to them. But, doubtless, this promise has more than such a private interpretation. Their return out of Babylon was typical of our redemption by Christ; and so the contents of these promises, 1. Were provided by the gospel of Christ. That glorious discovery of his love has given full assurance to all those who hear this joyful sound, that God has provided inestimable comforts for them, sufficient for the supply of all their wants, the balancing of all their griefs, and the answering of all their prayers. 2. They are applied by the grace and Spirit of Christ to all believers; that they may have strong consolation in their way, and a complete happiness in their end. Our way to heaven lies through the wilderness of this world: Now,

(1.) It is here supposed, that the people of God, in their passage through this world, are often in straits; *The poor and needy seek water, and there is none; the poor in spirit hunger and thirst after righteousness*. The soul of man, finding itself empty and necessitous, seeks for satisfaction somewhat, but soon despairs of finding it in the world, that he nothing in it to make it easy: creatures are broken cisterns that can hold no water; so that *their tongue fails for thirst*, they are weary of seeking that satisfaction in the world, which is not to be had in it. Their sorrow makes them thirsty; so does their toil.

(2.) It is here promised, that, one way or other, all their grievances shall be redressed, and they shall be made easy.

[1.] God himself will be nigh unto them in all that which they call upon him for. Let all the praying people of God take notice of this, and take comfort of it; he has said, "*I the Lord will hear them*, will answer them, *I the God of Israel will not forsake them*; I will be with them, as I have always been, in their distresses." While we are in the wilderness of this world, this promise is to us what the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel, an assurance of God's gracious presence.

[2.] They shall have a constant supply of fresh water, as Israel had in the wilderness, even there, where one would least expect it; (v. 18.) *I will open rivers in high places*; rivers of grace, rivers of pleasure, *rivers of living water*, which he spake of the Spirit, (John vii. 38, 39.) that Spirit which should be poured out upon the Gentiles, who had been as high places, dry and barren, and lifted up in their own conceit above the necessity of that gift. And there shall be *fountains in the midst of the valleys*, the valleys of Baca, (Ps. lxxxiv. 6.) that are sandy and wearisome; or among the Jews who had been

as fruitful valleys in comparison with the Gentile mountains. The preaching of the gospel to the world turned that wilderness into a pool of water; yielding fruit to the Owner of it, and relief to the travellers through it.

[3.] They shall have a pleasant shade to screen them from the scorching heat of the sun, as Israel, when they pitched at Elim, where they had not only wells of water, but *palm-trees*; (Exod. xv. 27.) "*I will plant in the wilderness the cedar*; (v. 19.) I will turn the wilderness into an orchard or garden, such as used to be planted with these pleasant trees, so that they shall pass through the wilderness with as much ease and delight as a man walks in his grove. These trees shall be to them then what the pillar of cloud was to Israel in the wilderness, a shelter from the heat." Christ and his grace are so to believers, *as the shadow of a great rock*, ch. xxxii. 2. When God sets up his church in the Gentile wilderness, there shall be as great a change made by it in men's characters, as if thorns and briars were turned into cedars, and fir-trees, and myrtles; and by this a blessed change is described, ch. lv. 13.

[4.] They shall see and acknowledge the hand of God, his power and his favour in this, v. 20. God will do these strange and surprising things, on purpose to awaken them to a conviction and consideration of his hand in all; that they may see this wonderful change, and, knowing that it is above the ordinary course and power of nature, may consider that therefore it comes from a superior power; and, comparing notes upon it, may understand together, and concur in the acknowledgment of it, that the hand of the Lord, that mighty hand of his which is stretched out for his people, and stretched out to them, has done this, and the *Holy One of Israel has created it*, made it anew, made it out of nothing, made it for the comfort of his people. Note, God does great things for his people, that he may be taken notice of.

21. Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. 22. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things what they be that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. 23. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. 24. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of naught: and abomination is he that chooseth you. 25. I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name; and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay. 26. Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and before-time, that we may say, *He is righteous*? yea, *there is none* that sheweth; yea, *there is none* that declareth; yea, *there is none* that heareth your words. 27. The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings. 28. For I beheld, and *there was no man*;

even among them, and *there was no counsellor*, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word. 29. Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion.

The Lord, by the prophet, here repeats the challenge to idolaters, to make out the pretensions of their idols; "*Produce your cause*, (v. 21.) and make your best of it; *bring forth the strong reasons* you have, to prove that your idols are gods, and worthy your adoration." Note, There needs no more to show the absurdity of sin, than to produce the reasons that are given in defence of it, for they carry with them their own confutation.

I. The idols are here challenged to bring proofs of their knowledge and power. Let us see what they can inform us of, and what they can do: understanding and active power are the accomplishments of a man; whoever pretends to be a god, must have these in perfection. And have the idols made it to appear that they have? No; 1. "They can tell us nothing that we did not know before, so ignorant are they. We challenge them to inform us," (1.) "What has been formerly; let them show the former things, and raise them out of the oblivion in which they were buried;" (God inspired Moses to write such a history of the creation as the gods of the heathen could never have dictated to any of their enthusiasts;) or, "let the defenders of idols tell us what mighty achievements they can boast of, as performed by their gods in former times. What did they ever do that was worth taking notice of? Let them specify any thing, and it shall be considered, its due weight shall be given it, and it shall be compared with the latter end of it; and if, in the issue, it prove to be as great as it pretended to be, they shall have the credit of it." (2.) "We challenge them to tell us what shall happen, to declare to us things to come, (v. 22.) and again, (v. 23.) *show the things that are to come hereafter*. Give this evidence of your omniscience, that nothing can be hid from you, and of your sovereignty and dominion; make it to appear that you have the doing of all, by letting us know beforehand what you design to do. Do this kindness to the world; let them know what is to come that they may provide accordingly. Do this, and we will own that you are gods above us, and gods to us, and worthy of our adorations." No creature can foretell things to come, otherwise than by divine information, with any certainty. 2. "They can do nothing that we cannot do ourselves, so impotent are they." He challenges them to do either good or evil, good to their friends or evil to their enemies; "Let them do, if they can, any thing extraordinary, that people will admire and be affected with. Let them either bless or curse with power. Let us see them either inflict such plagues as God brought on Egypt, or bestow such blessings as God bestowed on Israel. Let them do some great thing, and we shall be amazed when we see it, and frightened into a veneration of them, as many have been into a veneration of the true God."

That which is charged upon these idols, and let them disprove it if they can, is, that they are of nothing, v. 24. Their claims have no foundation at all, nor is there any ground or reason, in the least, for men's paying them the respect they do; there is nothing in them worthy our regard. "They are less than nothing, worse than nothing;" so some read it. "*The work they do is of naught*, and so is the *ado* that is made about them; there is no pretence or colour for it; it is all a jest, it is all a sham put upon the world; and therefore he that chooses you, and so gives you your deity, and" (as some read it) "that delights in you, is an abomination to God



and all wise and good men. He that *chooses you, chooses an abomination*;" so some take it. A servant is at liberty to choose his master, but a man is not at liberty to choose his god. He that chooses any other than the true God, chooses an abomination; his choosing it makes it so.

II. God here produces proofs that he is the true God, and none besides. Let him produce his strong reasons:

1. He has an irresistible power. This he will shortly make to appear in the raising up of Cyrus, and making him a type of Christ; (v. 25.) *He will raise him up from the north and from the rising of the sun.* Cyrus, by his father, was a Mede, by his mother, a Persian; and his army consisted of Medes, whose country lay north, and Persians, whose country lay east, from Babylon. God will raise him up to great power, and he shall come against Babylon, with ends of his own to serve. But, (1.) *He shall proclaim God's name*; so it may be read. He shall publish the honour of the God of Israel; so he did remarkably, when, in his proclamation for the release of the Jews out of their captivity, he acknowledged that the Lord God of Israel was the Lord God of heaven, and *the God*: and he might be said to call on his name, when he encouraged the building of his temple, and, very probably, did himself call upon him, and pray to him, Ezra i. 2, 3. (2.) All opposition shall fall before him; *he shall come upon the princes of Babylon*, and all others that stood in his way, as mortar, and trample upon them, *as the potter treads clay*, to serve his own purposes with it. Christ, as Man, was raised up from the north, for Nazareth lay in the northern parts of Canaan; as the Angel of the covenant, he ascends from the east. He maintained the honour of heaven; (*he shall call upon my name*;) and brake the powers of hell, came upon the prince of darkness as mortar, and trod him down.

2. He has an infallible foresight. He would not only do this, but he did now, by his prophet, foretell it. Now the false gods not only could not do it, but they could not foresee it. (1.) He challenges them to produce any of their pretended deities, or their diviners, that had given notice of this, or could, v. 26. "Who has declared from the beginning any thing of this kind, or has told it beforetime? Tell us if there by any that we know of, for we know not any; if there be any, *we will say, He is righteous*, he is true, his cause is just, his claims are proved, and he is in the right, in demanding to be worshipped." This agrees with v. 22, 23. (1.) He challenges to himself the sole honour of doing it, and foretelling it; (v. 27.) *I am the first* (so it may be read) *that will say to Zion, Behold, behold them*; that will let the people of Israel know their deliverers are at hand; for there were those who understood by books, God's books, the approach of the time, Dan. ix. 2. And I am he that *will give to Jerusalem one that brings good tidings*, these good tidings of their enlargement. This is applicable to the work of redemption, in which the Lord showed himself much more than in the release of the Jews out of Babylon: yet it was that contrived our salvation, and he brought it about, and he has given to us the glad tidings of reconciliation.

*Lastly*, Judgment is here given upon this trial:

1. None of all the idols had foretold, or could foresee, this work of wonder. Other nations beside the Jews were released out of captivity in Babylon by Cyrus, or, at least, were greatly concerned in the revolution of the monarchy, and the transferring of it to the Persians; and yet none of them had any intelligence given them of it beforehand, by any of their gods or prophets; "There is none that shows, (v. 26.) none that declares; none that gives the least intimation of it; there is none of the

nations that hears your words, that can pretend to have heard from their gods such words as you, O Israelites, have heard from your God, by your prophets," Ps. cxlvii. 20. None of all the gods of the nations have showed their worshippers the way of salvation, which God will show by the Messiah. The good tidings which the Lord will send in the gospel, is a mystery hid from ages and generations, Rom. xvi. 25, 26.

2. None of those who pleaded for them could produce any instance of their knowledge or power, that had in it any colour of proof that they were gods: all their advocates were struck dumb with this challenge, (v. 28.) "I beheld, and there was no man that could give evidence for them, even among them that were their most zealous admirers, and there was no counsellor, there were none that could offer any thing for the support of their cause. Even among the idols themselves there was none fit to give counsel in the most trivial matters, and yet there were those that asked counsel of them in the most important and difficult affairs. When I asked them what they had to say for themselves, they stood mute; the case was so plain against them, there was none that could answer a word." Judgment must therefore be given against the defendant upon *Nil dicit—he is mute*: he has nothing to say for himself; *he was speechless*, Matth. xxii. 12.

3. Sentence is therefore given according to the charge exhibited against them; (v. 24.) "Behold, they are all vanity, (v. 29.) they are a lie and a cheat, they are not in themselves what they pretend to be, nor will their worshippers find that in them which they promise themselves. Their works are nothing, of no force, of no worth; their enemies need fear no hurt from them, their worshippers can hope for no good from them. Their molten images, and indeed all their images, are wind and confusion, vanity and vexation; those that worship them will be deceived in them, and will reflect upon their own folly with the greatest bitterness. Therefore, *dearly beloved, flee from idolatry*," 1 Cor. x. 14.

## CHAP. XLII.

The prophet seems here to launch out yet further into the prophecy of the Messiah and his kingdom, under the type of Cyrus; and, having the great work of man's salvation by him yet more in view, he almost forgets the occasion that led him into it, and drops the return out of Babylon; for indeed the prospect of this would be a greater comfort and support to the believing pious Jews, in their captivity, than the hope of that. And (as Mr. Gataker well observes) in this, and similar prophecies of Christ, that are couched in types, as of David and Solomon, some passages agree to the type and not to the truth, others to the truth and not to the type, and many to the type in one sense, and the truth in another. Here is, I. A prophecy of the Messiah's coming with meekness, and yet with power, to do the Redeemer's work, v. 1.. 4. II. His commission opened, which he received from the Father, v. 5.. 9. III. The joy and rejoicing with which the glad tidings of this should be received v. 10.. 12. IV. The wonderful success of the gospel, for the overthrow of the devil's kingdom, v. 13.. 17. V. The rejection and ruin of the Jews for their unbelief, v. 18.. 25.

1. **B**EHOLD my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. 2. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. 3. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. 4. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set

judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

We are sure that these verses are to be understood of Christ, for the evangelist tells us expressly that in him this prophecy was fulfilled, Matth. xii. 17.—21. Behold with an eye of faith; behold, and observe; behold, and admire, my Servant whom I uphold. Let the Old Testament saints behold, and expect him; let the New Testament saints behold, and remember him. Now what must we behold and consider concerning him?

1. The Father's concern for him, and relation to him; the confidence he put, and the complacency he took, in him. This put an honour upon him, and made him remarkable, above any other circumstance, v. 1. (1.) God owns him as one employed for him; *He is my Servant*. Though he was a Son, yet, as a Mediator, he *took upon him the form of a servant*; learned obedience to the will of God, and practised it, and laid out himself to advance the interests of God's kingdom, and so he was God's servant. (2.) As one chosen by him; *He is mine elect*; he did not thrust himself into the service, but was called of God, and pitched upon as the fittest person for it. Infinite Wisdom made the choice, and then avowed it. (3.) As one he put a confidence in; *He is my servant on whom I lean*; so some read it. The Father put a confidence in him, that he would go through with his undertaking, and, in that confidence, brought many sons to glory. It was a great trust which the Father reposed in the Son, but he knew him to be *par negotia—equal to it*, both able and faithful. (4.) As one he took care of; *He is my servant whom I uphold*; so we read it. The Father bore him up, and bore him out, in his undertaking; both were included in his upholding of him; he stood by him, and strengthened him. (5.) As one whom he took an entire complacency in; *Mine elect, in whom my soul delights*. His delight was in him from eternity, when he was by him *as one brought up with him*, Prov. viii. 30. He had a particular satisfaction in his undertaking; he declared himself *well pleased in him*, (Matth. iii. 17.—xvii. 5.) and *therefore* loved him, because he laid down his life for the sheep. Let our souls delight in Christ, rely on him, and rejoice in him; and thus let us be united to him, and then, for his sake, the Father will be well pleased with us.

2. The qualification of him for his office; *I have put my Spirit upon him*, to enable him to go through his undertaking, ch. lxi. 1. The Spirit did not only come; but rest, upon him, (ch. xi. 2.) not by measure, as on others of God's servants, but without measure. Those whom God employs as his servants, as he will uphold them, and be well pleased with them, so he will put his Spirit upon them.

3. The work to which he is appointed; it was to bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, that is, in infinite wisdom, holiness, and equity, to set up a religion in the world, under the bonds of which the Gentiles should come, and the blessings of which they should enjoy. The judgments of the Lord, which had been hid from the Gentiles, (Ps. cxlvii. 20.) he came to bring forth to the Gentiles, for he was to be a *Light to lighten them*.

4. The mildness and tenderness with which he should pursue this undertaking, v. 2, 3. He shall carry it on, (1.) In silence, and without noise; *He shall not strive, nor cry*. It shall not be proclaimed, *Lo, here is Christ*; or, *Lo, he is there*; as when great princes ride in progress, or make a public entry. He shall have no trumpet sounded before him, nor any noisy retinue to follow him. The opposition he meets with, he shall not strive against, but patiently *endure the contradiction of sinners*

*against himself*; his kingdom is spiritual, and therefore its weapons are not carnal, nor its appearance pompous; it comes not with observation. (2.) Gently, and without rigour. Those that are wicked he will be patient with; when he has begun to crush them, so that they are as bruised reeds, he will give them space to repent, and not immediately break them; though they are very offensive, as smoking flax, (ch. lxi. 5.) yet he will bear with them, as he did with Jerusalem. Those that are weak he will be tender of; those that have but a little life, a little heat, that are weak as a reed, oppressed with doubts and fears, as a bruised reed, that are as smoking flax, as the wick of a candle newly lighted, which is ready to go out again, he will not despise them, will not plead against them with his great power, nor lay upon them more work, or more suffering, than they can bear, which would break and quench them, but will graciously consider their frame. More is implied than is expressed; he will not break the bruised reed, but will strengthen it, that it may become as a cedar in the courts of our God. He will not quench the smoking flax, but blow it up into a flame. Note, Jesus Christ is very tender toward those that have true grace, though they are but weak in it, and accepts the willingness of the spirit, pardoning and passing by the weakness of the flesh.

5. The courage and constancy with which he should persevere in this undertaking, so as to carry his point at last; (v. 4.) *He shall not fail, nor be discouraged*; though he meets with hard service, and much opposition, and foresees how ungrateful the world will be, yet he goes on with his part of the work, till he is able to say, *It is finished*; and he enables his apostles and ministers to go on with theirs too, and not to fail or be discouraged, till they also have finished their testimony. And thus he accomplishes what he undertook; (1.) *He brings forth judgment unto truth*; by a long course of miracles, and his resurrection at last, he shall fully evince the truth of his doctrine, and the divine original and authority of that holy religion which he came to establish. (2.) *He sets judgment in the earth*; he erects his government in the world, a church for himself among men; reforms the world, and by the power of his gospel and grace fixes such principles in the minds of men, as tend to make them wise and just. (3.) The isles of the Gentiles wait for his law, wait for his gospel; bid it welcome as if it had been a thing they had long waited for. They shall become his disciples, shall sit at his feet, and be ready to receive the law from his mouth. *What wilt thou have us to do?*

5. Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out: he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein; 6. I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; 7. To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house. 8. I am the LORD; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. 9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before thee

spring forth I tell you of them. 10. Sing unto the LORD a new song, *and* his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. 11. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up *their voice*, the villages *that* Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. 12. Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands.

Here is,

I. The covenant God made with, and the commission he gave to, the Messiah, *v. 5.—7.* which are an exposition of *v. 1.* *Behold my Servant, whom I uphold.*

1. The royal titles by which the great God here makes himself known, and distinguishes himself from all pretenders, speak very much his glory; (*v. 5.*) *Thus saith God the Lord:* and who art thou, Lord? He is the Fountain of all being, and therefore the Fountain of all power. He is the Fountain of being, (1.) In the upper world; for he *created the heavens, and stretched them out,* (*ch. xl. 22.*) and keeps the vast expanse still upon the stretch. (2.) In the lower world; for he spread forth the earth, and made it a capacious habitation, and that which comes out of it is produced by his power. (3.) In the world of mankind; He *gives breath to the people upon it*, not only air to breathe in, but the breath of life itself, and organs to breathe with; nay, he gives spirit, the powers and faculties of a rational soul, to them that walk therein. Now this is prefixed to God's covenant with the Messiah, and the commission given him, not only to show that he has authority to make such a covenant, and give such a commission, and had power sufficient to bear him out, but that the design of the work of redemption was to maintain the honour of the Creator, and to reduce man to the allegiance he owes to God as his Maker.

2. The assurances which he gives to the Messiah of his presence with him in all he did pursuant to his undertaking, speak much encouragement to him, *v. 6.* (1.) God owns that the Messiah did not take the honour of being Mediator to himself, but was called of God; that he was no Intruder, no Usurper, but was fairly brought to it; (*Heb. v. 4.*) *I have called thee in righteousness.* God not only did him no wrong in calling him to this hard service, he having voluntarily offered himself to it, but did himself right in providing for his own honour, and performing the word which he had spoken. (2.) He promises to stand by him and strengthen him in it; to hold his hand, not only *to* his work, but *in* it; to hold his hand, that it might not shake, that it might not fail, and so to keep him. When an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him in his agonies, and the Father himself was with him, then this promise was fulfilled. Note, Those whom God calls, he will own and help, and will hold their hands.

3. The great intentions of this commission speak abundance of comfort to the children of men: he was given for a Covenant of the people, for a Mediator, or Guarantee, of the covenant of grace, which is all summed up in him. God, in giving us Christ, has with him freely given us all the blessings of the new covenant. Two glorious blessings, Christ, in his gospel, brings with him to the Gentile world; light, and liberty. (1.) He is given for a Light to the Gentiles, not only to reveal to them what they were concerned to know, and which otherwise

they could not have known, but to open the blind eyes, that they might know it: by his Spirit in the word he presents the object, by his Spirit in the heart he prepares the organ. When the gospel came, light came, a great light to them that sat in darkness, *Matth. iv. 16.* *John iii. 19.* And St. Paul was sent to the Gentiles, *to open their eyes,* *Acts xxvi. 18.* Christ is the Light of the world. (2.) He is sent to proclaim liberty to the captives, as Cyrus did, to bring out the prisoners; not only to open the prison doors, and give them leave to go out, which was all that Cyrus could do, but to bring them out, to induce and enable them to make use of their liberty, which none did but those whose spirits God stirred up. This Christ does by his grace.

II. The ratification and confirmation of this grant that we may be assured of the validity of it, consider,

1. The authority of him that makes the promise, (*v. 8.*) *I am the Lord, Jehovah, that is my name,* and that was the name by which he made himself known when he began to perform the promise made to the patriarchs; whereas, before, he manifested himself by the name of God Almighty, *Exod. vi. 3.* If he is the Lord that gives being and birth to all things, he will give being and birth to this promise. If his name be *Jehovah*, which speaks him God alone, we may be sure his name is *Jealous*, and he *will not give his glory to another*, whoever it is that stands in competition with him, especially not to graven images. *Therefore* he will send the Messiah to open men's eyes, that so he may turn them from the service of dumb idols to serve the living God; because, though he has long winked at the times of ignorance, he will now maintain his prerogative, and will not give his glory to graven images. *Therefore* he will perform his word, because he will not lose the honour of being true to it, nor be ever charged with falsehood by the worshippers of false gods. *Therefore* he will deliver his people from under the power of idolaters, because it looks as if he had given his praise to graven images, when he gives up his own worshippers to be worshippers of images.

2. The accomplishment of the promises he had formerly made concerning his church, which are proofs of the truth of his word, and the kindness he bears to his people; (*v. 9.*) *"Behold, the former things are come to pass;* hitherto the Lord has helped his church, has supported her under former burthens, relieved her in former straits. And this, in performance of the promises made to the fathers; *there has not failed one word,* *1 Kings viii. 56.* And now new things do I declare; now I will make new promises, which shall as certainly be fulfilled in their season as old ones were; now I will bestow new favours, such as have not been conferred formerly. Old Testament blessings you have had abundantly, now I declare New Testament blessings; not a fruitful country, and dominion over your neighbours, but *spiritual blessings in heavenly things.* *Before they spring forth* in the preaching of the gospel, I tell you of them, under the type and figure of the former things." Note, The receipt of former mercies may encourage us to hope for further mercies; for God is constant in his care for his people, and his compassions are still new.

III. The song of joy and praise which should be sung hereupon, to the glory of God; (*v. 10.*) *Sing unto the Lord a new song,* a New Testament song. The giving of Christ for a *Light to the Gentiles,* (*v. 6.*) was a new thing, and very surprising; the apostle speaks of it as a mystery which, in other ages, was not made known, as it is now revealed, *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs,* *Eph. iii. 5, 6.* Now this being the new thing which God de

clares, the newness of the song which is to be sung on this occasion is this; that whereas, before, the songs of the Lord were very much confined to the temple at Jerusalem, (David's psalms were in the language of the Jews only, and sung by them, and in their own country only; for when they were in a strange land, they hung their harps on the willow trees, and could not sing the Lord's song, as we find, Ps. cxxxvii. 2.—4.) now, the songs of holy joy and praise shall be sung all the world over; the Gentile nations shall share equally with the Jews in New Testament blessings, and therefore shall join in New Testament praises and acts of worship. There shall be churches set up in Gentile nations, and they shall sing a new song. The conversion of the Gentiles is often foretold under this notion, as appears, Rom. xv. 9.—11.

It is here promised that the praises of God's grace shall be sung with joy and thankfulness; 1. By those that live in the end of the earth, in countries that lie most remote from Jerusalem; *From the uttermost parts of the earth have we heard songs, ch. xxiv. 16.* This was fulfilled when Christianity was planted in our land. 2. By mariners and merchants, and those that go down to the sea, that do business in great waters, and suck the riches of the sea, and so make themselves masters of the fulness thereof, and all that is therein, with which they shall praise God, and justly, for it is his, Ps. xxiv. 1.—xv. 5. The Jews traded little at sea; if therefore God's praises be sung by them that go down to the sea, it must be by Gentiles: seafaring men are called upon to praise God, Ps. cvii. 23. 3. By the islands and the inhabitants thereof, (v. 10.) and again, v. 12. Let them declare his praise in the islands, the isles of the Gentiles; probably referring to the islands of Greece. 4. *By the wilderness and the cities thereof, and the villages of Kedar.* These lay east from Jerusalem, as the islands lay west, so that the gospel-songs should be sung from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. The whole Gentile world had been like an island, cut off from communication with God's church, and like a wilderness uncultivated, and bringing forth no fruit to God; but now the islands and the wilderness shall praise God. 5. By the inhabitants of the rock, and those that dwell on the tops of the mountains, not only the Gentiles, but the poorest and meanest and most despicable; they that dwell in cottages, as well as those that inhabit cities and villages. The rude and most barbarous, as the mountaineers commonly are, shall be civilized by the gospel. Or, by the inhabitants of the rock may be meant the inhabitants of that part of Arabia which is called *Petræa—the rocky*. Perhaps the neighbouring countries shared in the joy of the Israelites when they returned out of Babylon, and some of them came and joined with them in their praises. But we find not that it was to any such degree as might fully answer this illustrious prophecy, and must conclude that it reaches further, and was fulfilled in that which many other prophecies of the joy of the nations are said in the New Testament to be fulfilled in, the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ: when they are brought into the church, they are brought to give glory to the Lord; then they are to him for a praise and a name, and they make it their business to praise him. He is glorified in them, and by them.

13. The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. 14. I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a

travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once. 15. I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs, and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools. 16. And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them. 17. They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods.

It comes all to one, whether we make these verses (as some do) the song itself that is to be sung by the Gentile world, or a prophecy of what God will do to make way for the singing of that song, that evangelical new song.

1. He will appear in his power and glory more than ever; so he did in the preaching of his gospel, in the divine power and energy which went along with it, and in the wonderful success it had in the *pulling down of Satan's strong holds, v. 13, 14. He had long holden his peace, and been still, and refrained himself, while he winked at the times of the ignorance of the Gentile world, (Acts xvii. 30.) and suffered all nations to walk on in their own ways; (Acts xiv. 16.) but now he shall go forth as a mighty man, as a man of war, to attack the devil's kingdom, and give it a fatal blow.* The going forth of the gospel is thus represented, Rev. vi. 2. Christ, in it, went forth conquering and to conquer. The ministry of the apostles is called their *warfare*; and they were the soldiers of Jesus Christ. He shall stir up jealousy, shall appear more jealous than ever for the glory of his own name, and against idolatry. (1.) He shall cry, in the preaching of his word, *cry like a travailing woman*; for the ministers of Christ preached as men in earnest, and that travailed in birth again till they saw Christ formed in the souls of the people, Gal. iv. 19. He shall cry, yea, roar, in the gospel-woes, which are more terrible than the roaring of a lion, and which must be preached along with gospel-blessings to awaken a sleeping world. (2.) He shall conquer by the power of his Spirit; *He shall prevail against his enemies, shall prevail to make them friends, Col. i. 21.* Those that contradict and blaspheme his gospel, he shall prevail to put them to silence and shame. He will destroy and devour at once all the oppositions of the powers of darkness; Satan shall fall as lightning from heaven, and he that had the power of death shall be destroyed. As a type and figure of this, to make way for the redemption of the Jews out of Babylon, God will humble the pride, and break the power, of their oppressors, and will at once destroy and devour the Babylonian monarchy. In accomplishing this destruction of Babylon by the Persian army under the command of Cyrus, *he will make waste mountains and hills, level the country, and dry up all their herbs*; the army, as usual, shall either carry off the forage or destroy it, and by laying bridges of boats over rivers shall turn them into islands, and so drain the fens and low grounds, to make way for the march of their army, that the pools shall be dried up. Thus, when the gospel shall be preached, it shall have a free course, and that which hinders the progress of it shall be taken out of the way.

2. He will manifest his favour and grace toward those whose spirits he had stirred up to follow him,

as *Ezra i. 5.* Those who ask the way to Zion he will show the way, and lead in it, *v. 16.* Those who by nature were blind, and those who, being under convictions of sin and wrath, are quite at a loss, and know not what to do with themselves, God will *lead by a way that they knew not*, will show them the way to life and happiness by Jesus Christ, who is the Way, and will conduct and carry them on in that way, which before they were strangers to. Thus, in the conversion of Paul, he was struck blind first, and then God revealed his Son in him, and made the scales to fall from his eyes. They are weak in knowledge, and the truths of God at first seem unintelligible; but God will *make darkness light before them*, and knowledge shall be easy to them. They are weak in duty, the commands of God seem impracticable, and insuperable difficulties are in the way of their obedience; but God will make crooked things straight, their way shall be plain, and their yoke easy. Those whom God brings into the right way, he will guide in it. As a type of this, he will lead the Jews, when they return out of captivity, in a ready road to their own land again, and nothing shall occur to perplex or embarrass them in their journey. These are great things, and kind things, very great and very kind; but lest any should say, "They are too great, too kind, to be expected from God by such an undeserving people as that of the Jews, such an undeserving world as that of the Gentiles," he adds, *These things will I do unto them*, take my word for it I will, and *I will not forsake them*; he that begins to show this great mercy will go on to do them good.

3. He will particularly put those to confusion who adhere to idols, notwithstanding the attempts made by the preaching of the gospel to turn them from idols; (*v. 17.*) *They shall be turned back, and greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images.* The Babylonians shall, when they see how the Jews, who despise their images, are owned and delivered by the God they worship without images; and the Gentiles, when they see how idolatry falls before the preaching of the gospel, is scattered like darkness before the light of the sun, and melts like snow before its heat, they shall be ashamed that ever they said to these molten images, *Ye are our gods*; for how can they help their worshippers, who cannot help themselves, nor save themselves from falling into contempt? In times of reformation, when many turn from iniquity, and sin, being generally deserted, becomes unfashionable, it may be hoped that those who will not otherwise be reclaimed, will be wrought upon by that consideration to be ashamed of it.

18. Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. 19. Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the LORD's servant? 20. Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not. 21. The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable. 22. But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore. 23. Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken, and hear for the time to come? 24. Who gave

Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. 25. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.

The prophet having spoken by way of comfort and encouragement to the believing Jews who waited for the consolation of Israel, here turns himself to those among them who were unbelieving, for their conviction and humiliation. Among those who were captivated in Babylon, there were some who were as the evil figs in Jeremiah's vision, who were sent thither *for their hurt, to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, for a reproach and a proverb*, Jer. xxiv. 9. In them there was a type of the Jews who rejected Christ, and were rejected by him, and then fell more than ever under the curse, when those who believed were inheriting the blessing; for they were broken and ruined, and remain dispersed unto this day. Observe,

I. The call that is given to this people: (*v. 18.*) "*Hear, ye deaf*, and attend to the joyful sound, and *look, ye blind, that ye may see the joyful light.*" There is no absurdity in this command, nor is it unbecoming the wisdom and goodness of God to call us to do that good which yet of ourselves we are not sufficient for; for those have natural powers, which they may employ so as to do better than they do, and may have supernatural grace if it be not their own fault, who yet labour under a moral impotency to that which is good. This call to the deaf to hear, and the blind to see, is like the command given to the man that had the withered hand, to stretch it forth; though he could not do this, because it was withered, yet, if he had not attempted to do it, he had not been healed, and his being healed thereupon was owing, not to his act, but to the divine power.

II. The character that is given of them; (*v. 19, 20.*) *Who is blind, but my servant, or deaf, as my messenger?* The people of the Jews were in profession, God's servants, and their priests and elders his messengers; (*Mal. ii. 7.*) but they were deaf and blind. The verse before may be understood as spoken to the Gentile idolaters, whom he calls *deaf and blind*, because they worshipped gods that were so. "But," says he, "no wonder ye are deaf and blind, when my own people are as bad as you, and many of them as much set upon idolatry." He complains of their sottishness, They are blind; and of their stubbornness, They are deaf. They were even worse than the Gentiles themselves. *Corruptio optimi est pessima*—*What is best, becomes, when corrupted, the worst.* Who is so wilfully, so scandalously, blind and deaf as my servant and my messenger, as Jacob who is my servant, (*ch. xli. 8.*) and as their prophets and teachers who are my messengers? Who is blind as he that, in profession and pretension, is perfect, that should come nearer to perfection than other people, their priests and prophets? The one prophesies falsely, and the other bears rule by their means; and who so blind as they that will not see when they have the light shining in their faces? Note, 1. It is a common thing, but a very sad thing, for those that, in profession, are God's servants and messengers, to be themselves blind and deaf in spiritual things; ignorant, erroneous, and very careless. 2. Blindness and deafness in spiritual things

are worse in those that profess themselves to be God's servants and messengers than in others. It is in them the greater sin and shame, the greater dishonour to God, and to themselves a greater damnation.

The prophet goes on (v. 20.) to describe the blindness and obstinacy of the Jewish nation, just as our Saviour describes it in his time; (Matth. xiii. 14, 15.) *Seeing many things, but thou observest not.* Multitudes are ruined for want of observing that which they cannot but see; they perish not through ignorance, but mere carelessness. The Jews, in our Saviour's time, saw many proofs of his divine mission, but they did not observe them; they seemed to open their ears to him, but they did not hear, they did not heed, did not understand, or believe or obey, and then it was all one as if they had not heard.

III. The care God will take of the honour of his own name, notwithstanding their blindness and deafness, especially of his word, which he has magnified above all his name. *Shall the unbelief and obstinacy of men make the promise of God of no effect? God forbid,* Rom. iii. 3. No, though they are blind and deaf, God will be no loser in his glory; (v. 21.) *The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness's sake;* not well pleased with their sin, but well pleased in the manifestation of his own righteousness, in rejecting them for rejecting the great salvation. He speaks as one well pleased; (ch. i. 24.) *Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries;* and (Ezek. v. 13.) he will be comforted. The scripture was fulfilled in the casting off the Jews as well as in the calling in of the Gentiles, and therein the Lord will be well pleased. *He will magnify the law,* divine revelation in all the parts of it, and will make it honourable. The law is truly honourable, and the things of it are great things; if men will not magnify it by their obedience to it, God will magnify it himself by punishing them for their disobedience. He will magnify the law by accomplishing what is written in it, will magnify its authority, its efficacy, its equity: he will do it at last, when all men shall be judged by the law of liberty, James ii. 12. He is doing it every day. What is it that God is doing in the world, but magnifying the law, and making it honourable.

IV. The calamities God will bring upon the Jewish nation for their wilful blindness and deafness, v. 22. They are robbed and spoiled. Those that were impenitent and unreformed in Babylon, were sentenced to perpetual captivity. It was for their sins that they were spoiled of all their possessions, not only in their own land, but in the land of their enemies. They were some of them snared in holes, and others hidden in prison-houses; they cannot help themselves, for they are snared; their friends cannot help them, for they are hidden; and their enemies have forgotten them in their prisons. They, and all they have, are for a prey and for a spoil: and there is none that delivers either by force or ransom; nor any that dares say to the proud oppressors, *Restore.* There they lie, and there they are likely to lie. This had its full accomplishment in the final destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, which God brought upon them for rejecting the gospel of Christ.

V. The counsel given them in order to their relief; for, though their case be sad, it is not desperate. The generality of them are deaf, they would not hearken to the voice of God's word; he will therefore try his rod, and see *who among them will give ear to that,* v. 23. We must not despair concerning those who have been long reasoned with in vain; some of them may, at length, give ear and hearken: if one method do not take effect, another may, and sinners shall be left inexcusa-

ble. Observe, 1. We may all of us, if we will, hear the voice of God, and we are called and invited to hear it. 2. It is worth while to inquire who they are, that perceive God speaking to them, and are willing to hear him. 3. Of the many that hear the voice of God, there are very few that hearken to it or heed it, that hear it with attention and application. 4. In hearing the word, we must have an eye to the time to come. We must hear for hereafter, for what may occur betwixt us and the grave; we must especially hear for eternity. We must hear the word with another world in our eye. The counsel is,

(1.) To acknowledge the hand of God in their afflictions, and, whoever were the instruments, to have an eye to him as the principal Agent; (v. 24.) *"Who gave Jacob and Israel, that people that used to have such an interest in heaven, and such a dominion on earth, who gave them for a spoil to the robbers, as they are now to the Babylonians and to the Romans? Did not the Lord? You know he did; consider it then, and hear his voice in these judgments."*

(2.) To acknowledge that they had provoked God thus to abandon them, and had brought all these calamities upon themselves. [1.] These punishments were first inflicted on them for their disobedience to the laws of God; it is he *against whom we have sinned;* the prophet puts himself into the number of the sinners, as Dan ix. 7, 8. *"We have sinned, we have all brought fuel to the fire; and there are those among us that have wilfully refused to walk in his ways."* Jacob and Israel had never been given up to the robbers, if they had not by their iniquities sold themselves. *Therefore* it is, because they have violated the commands of the law, that God has brought upon them the curses of the law; he has not dropped, but *poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle,* all the desolations of war, which have *set him on fire round about;* for God surrounds the wicked with his judgments, as he does the righteous with his favours. See the power of God's anger; there is no resisting it, no escaping it. See the mischief that sin makes; it provokes God to anger against a people, and so kindles an universal conflagration, sets all on fire. [2.] These judgments were continued upon them for their senselessness and incorrigibility under the rod of God. The fire of God's wrath kindled upon him, and he knew it not, was not aware of it, took no notice of the judgments, at least not of the hand of God in them. Nay, it burned him, and though he could not then but know it, and feel it, yet he laid it not to heart, was not awakened by the fiery rebukes he was under, nor at all affected with them. Those who are not humbled by lesser judgments must expect greater; for when God judges, he will overcome.

## CHAP. XLIII.

The contents of this chapter are much the same with those of the foregoing chapter, looking at the release of the Jews out of their captivity; but looking through that, and beyond that, to the great work of man's redemption by Jesus Christ, and the grace of the gospel, which, through him, believers partake of. Here are, 1. Precious promises made to God's people in their affliction, of his presence with them, for their support under it, and their deliverance out of it, v. 1. 7. II. A challenge to idols to vie with the omniscience and omnipotence of God, v. 8. 13. III. Encouragement given to the people of God to hope for their deliverance out of Babylon, from the consideration of what God did for their fathers when he brought them out of Egypt, v. 14. 21. IV. A method taken to prepare the people for their deliverance, by putting them in mind of their sins, by which they had provoked God to send them into captivity, and continue them there, that they might repent, and seek to God for pardoning mercy, v. 22. 28.



1. **B**UT now, thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. 2. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. 3. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour. I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. 4. Since thou wast precious in my sight thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. 5. Fear not; for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; 6. I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; 7. *Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.*

This chapter has a plain connexion with the close of the foregoing chapter, but a very surprising one. It was there said that Jacob and Israel would not walk in God's ways, and that when he corrected them for their disobedience, they were stubborn, and laid it not to heart; and now one would think it should have followed, that God would utterly abandon and destroy them; no, the next words are, *But now, fear not, O Jacob, O Israel; I have redeemed thee, and thou art mine.* Though many among them were untractable and incorrigible, yet God would continue his love and care for his people, and the body of that nation should still be reserved for mercy. God's goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious; *where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*, (Rom. v. 20.) and mercy rejoices against judgment, as having prevailed and carried the day, Jam. ii. 13.

Now the sun, breaking out thus of a sudden from behind a thick and dark cloud, shines the brighter, and with a pleasing surprise. The expressions of God's favour and good will to his people here, are very high, and speak abundance of comfort to all the spiritual seed of upright Jacob and praying Israel; *for to us is this gospel preached as well as unto them that were captives in Babylon*, Heb. iv. 2. Here we have,

I. The grounds of God's care and concern for his people, and the interests of his church and kingdom among men. Jacob and Israel, though in a sinful, miserable condition, shall be looked after; for, 1. They are God's workmanship, *created by him unto good works*, Eph. ii. 10. He has created them and formed them, not only given them a being, but this being, formed them into a people, constituted their government, and incorporated them by the charter of his covenant. The new creature, wherever it is, is of God's forming, and *he will not forsake the work of his own hands*. 2. They are the people of his purchase; he has redeemed them; out of the land of Egypt he first redeemed them, and out of many another bondage, *in his love and in his pity*, (ch. lxiii. 9.) much more will he take

care of those who are redeemed with the blood of his Son. 3. They are his peculiar people, whom he has distinguished from others, and set apart for himself; he has called them by name, as those he has a particular intimacy with and concern for, and they are his, appropriated to him, and that he has a special interest in. 4. He is their God in covenant; (v. 3.) *I am the Lord thy God*, worshipped by thee, and engaged by promise to thee; *the Holy One of Israel*, the God of Israel; for the true God is a holy One, and holiness becomes his house. And upon all these accounts he might justly say, *Fear not*, v. 1. and again, v. 5. *Fear not*. Those that have God for them, need not fear who or what can be against them.

II. The former instances of this care. 1. God had purchased them dear; *I gave Egypt for thy ransom*; for Egypt was quite laid waste by one plague after another, all their first-born slain, and all their men of war drowned; and all this to force a way for Israel's deliverance from them. Egypt shall be sacrificed rather than Israel shall be continued in slavery, when the time is come for their release. The Ethiopians had invaded them in Asa's time; but they shall be destroyed rather than Israel shall be disturbed. And if this was reckoned so great a thing, to give Egypt for their ransom, what reason have we to admire God's love to us in giving his own Son to be a *Ransom for us*? 1 John iv. 10. What are Ethiopia and Seba, all their lives and all their treasures, compared with the blood of Christ? 2. He had prized them accordingly, and they were very dear to him; (v. 4.) *Since thou hast been precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable*. Note, True believers are precious in God's sight, they are his jewels, his peculiar treasure, (Exod. xix. 5.) he loves them, his delight is in them, above any people; his church is his vineyard. And this makes God's people truly honourable, and their name great: for men are really what they are in God's eye. When the forces of Sennacherib, that they might be diverted from falling upon Israel, were directed by Providence to fall upon Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba, then God gave these countries for Israel, and showed how precious his people were in his sight. So some understand it.

III. The further instances God would yet give them of his care and kindness:

1. He would be present with them in their greatest difficulties and dangers: (v. 2.) *"When thou passest through the waters and the rivers, through the fire and the flame, I will be with thee, and that shall be thy security; when dangers are very imminent and threatening, thou shalt be delivered out of them."* Did they, in their journey, pass through deep waters? They should not perish in them; *The rivers shall not overflow thee*. Should they by their persecutors be cast into a fiery furnace, for their constant adherence to their God? Yet then the flame should not kindle upon them; which was fulfilled in the letter, in the wonderful preservation of the three children, Dan. iii. Though they went through fire and water, which would be to them as *the valley of the shadow of death*; yet, while they had God with them, they need fear no evil, they should be borne up, and *brought out into a wealthy place*, Ps. lxxvi. 12.

2. He would still, when there was occasion, make all the interests of the children of men give way to the interests of his own children; *"I will give men for thee, great men, mighty men, and men of war, and people, men by wholesale, for thy life. Nations shall be sacrificed to thy welfare."* All shall be cut off rather than God's Israel shall, so precious are they in his sight. The affairs of the world shall all be ordered and directed so as to be most for the good of the church, 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

3. Those of them that were scattered and dispersed in other nations, should all be gathered in, and share in the blessings of the public, *v.* 5—7. Some of the seed of Israel were dispersed into all countries, east, west, north, and south, or into all the parts of the country of Babylon; but those whose spirits God stirred up to go to Jerusalem, should be fetched in from all parts; divine grace should reach those that lay most remote, and at the greatest distance from each other; and when the time was come, nothing should prevent their coming together to return in a body; in answer to that prayer, (*Ps.* cvi. 47.) *Gather us from among the heathen*, and in performance of that promise, (*Deut.* xxx. 4.) *If any of thine be driven to the utmost parts of heaven, thence will the Lord thy God gather thee*; which we find pleaded on behalf of the children of the captivity, *Neh.* i. 9. But who are the seed of Israel, that shall be thus carefully gathered in? He tells us, (*v.* 7.) they are such as God has marked for mercy; for, (1.) They are called by his name; they make profession of religion, and are distinguished from the rest of the world by their covenant-relation to God, and denomination from him. (2.) They are created for his glory; the spirit of Israelites is created in them, and they are formed according to the will of God, and these shall be gathered in. Note, Those only are fit to be called by the name of God, that are created by his grace for his glory; and those whom God has created and called shall be gathered in now to Christ as their Head, and hereafter to heaven as their home. He shall *gather in his elect from the four winds*. This promise points at the gathering in of the dispersed of the Gentiles, and the strangers scattered by the gospel of Christ, who died to *gather together in one* the children of God that were scattered abroad; for the promise was to all that were afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call and create. God is with the church, and therefore let her not fear; none that belong to her shall be lost.

8. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. 9. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, *It is truth*. 10. *Ye are my witnesses*, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that *I am* he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. 11. *I, even I am the Lord*; and besides me *there is no Saviour*. 12. I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when *there was no strange god* among you: therefore *ye are my witnesses*, saith the Lord, that *I am* God. 13. Yea, before the day *was* *I am* he; and *there is none* that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?

God here challenges the worshippers of idols to produce such proofs of the divinity of their false gods as even this very instance (to go no further) of the redemption of the Jews out of Babylon furnished the people of Israel with, to prove that their God is the true and the living God, and he only.

I. The patrons of idolatry are here called to appear, and say what they have to say in defence of

their idols, *v.* 8, 9. Their gods have *eyes*, and *see not*, *ears*, and *hear not*, and they that make them, and trust in them, are like unto them; so David had said, (*Ps.* cxv. 8.) to which the prophet seems here to refer, when he calls idolaters *blind people that have eyes*, and *deaf people that have ears*. They have the shape, capacities, and faculties, of men; but they are, in effect, destitute of reason and common sense, or they would never worship gods of their own making; *“Let all the nations therefore be gathered together*, let them help one another, and with a combined force plead the cause of their dunghill gods. And if they have nothing to say in their own justification, let them hear what the God of Israel has to say for their conviction and confutation.”

II. God's witnesses are subpoenaed, or summoned to appear, and give in evidence for him; (*v.* 10.) *“Ye, O Israelites, all ye that are called by my name, ye are all my witnesses, and so is my Servant whom I have chosen.”* It was Christ himself that was so described, (*ch.* xlii. 1.) *My Servant, and mine Elect*. All the prophets that testified to Christ, and Christ himself, the great Prophet, are here appealed to as God's witnesses. 1. God's people are witnesses for him, and can attest, upon their own knowledge and experience, concerning the power of his grace, the sweetness of his comforts, the tenderness of his providence, and the truth of his promise. They will be forward to witness for him that he is gracious, and that no word of his has fallen to the ground. 2. His prophets are in a particular manner witnesses for him, with whom his secret is, and who know more of him than others do. But the Messiah especially is given to be a Witness for him to the people; having lain in his bosom from eternity, he has declared him. Now,

(1.) Let us see what the point is, which these witnesses are called to prove; (*v.* 12.) *Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am* God. Note, Those who do themselves acknowledge that the Lord is God, should be ready to testify what they know of him to others, that they also may be brought to the acknowledgment of it; *I believed, therefore have I spoken*. Particularly, “Since you cannot but know, and believe, and understand, you must be ready to bear record, [1.] That I am he, the only true God; that I am a Being, self-existent, and self-sufficient; I am he whom you are to fear, and worship, and trust in. Nay, (*v.* 13.) *before the day was*, before the first day of time, before the creation of the light, and, consequently, from eternity, I am he.” The idols were but of yesterday, *new gods that came newly up*, (*Deut.* xxxii. 17.) but the God of Israel was from everlasting. [2.] That *there was no God formed before me, nor shall be after me*. The idols were gods formed, (*Dii facti—made gods, or rather fictitious*) by nature they were no gods, *Gal.* iv. 8. But God had a being from eternity, yea, and a religion in this world, before there were either idols or idolaters; truth is more ancient than error; and he will have a being to eternity, and will be worshipped and glorified when idols are famished and abolished, and idolatry shall be no more. True religion will keep its ground, and survive all opposition and competition; *great is the truth, and will prevail*. [3.] That *I, even I, am the Lord*, the great Jehovah, who is, and was, and is to come; and *beside me there is no Saviour*, *v.* 11. See what it is that the great God glories in, not so much that he is the only Ruler, as that he is the only Saviour; for he *delights to do good*, he is the *Saviour of all men*, *1 Tim.* iv. 10.

(2.) Let us see what the proofs are, which are produced for the confirmation of this point. It appears,

[1.] That the Lord is God, by two proofs. *First*,

He has an infinite and infallible knowledge, as is evident from the *predictions of his word*; (v. 12.) "*I have declared, and I have showed*, that which has without fail come to pass; nay, I never declared or showed any thing, but it has been accomplished; *I showed when there was no strange god among you*, when you pretended not to consult any oracles but mine, or to have any prophets but mine." It is said, when they came out of Egypt, that *the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him*. Secondly, He has an infinite and irresistible power, as is evident from the performances of his providence. He pleads not only, *I have showed*, but, *I have saved*, not only foretold what none else could foresee, but done what none else could do; for, (v. 13.) "*None can deliver out of my hand those whom I will punish; not only no man can, but none of all the gods of the heathen can protect*." It is therefore *a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*, because there is no getting out of them again. "I will work what I have designed, both in mercy and judgment, and who shall either oppose or retard it?"

[2.] That the gods of the heathen, who are rivals with him, are not only inferior to him, but no gods at all; which is proved (v. 9.) by a challenge, *Who among them can declare this that I now declare?* Who can foretell things to come? Nay, which of them can *show us former things?* ch. xli. 22. They cannot so much as inspire an historian, much less a prophet. They are challenged to join issue upon this; *Let them bring forth their witnesses*, to prove their omniscience and omnipotence. And, *First*, If they do prove them, they shall be justified, the idols in demanding homage, and the idolaters in paying it. *Secondly*, If they do not prove them, let them say, It is truth; let them own the true God, and receive the truth concerning him, that he is God alone. The cause of God is not afraid to stand a fair trial; but it may reasonably be expected that these who cannot justify themselves in their irreligion, should submit to the power of the truth and true godliness.

14. Thus saith the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. 15. I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. 16. Thus saith the LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; 17. Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army, and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow. 18. Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. 19. Behold, I will do a new thing: now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. 20. The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. 21. This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.

To so low an ebb were the faith and hope of God's people in Babylon brought, that there needed line

upon line to assure them that they should be released out of their captivity; and therefore that they might have strong consolation, the assurances of it are often repeated, and here very expressly and encouragingly.

1. God here takes to himself such titles of his honour as were very encouraging to them; he is *the Lord their Redeemer*; not only that will redeem them, but will take it upon him as his office, and make it his business. If he be their God, he will be all that to them which they need, and therefore, when they are in bondage, he will be their Redeemer; he is *the Holy One of Israel*; and again, (v. 15.) *their Holy One*, and therefore will make good every word he has spoken to them. He is the Creator of Israel, that made them a people out of nothing, (for that is creation,) nay, worse than nothing; and he is their King, that owns them as his people, and presides among them.

2. He assures them he will find out a way to break the power of their oppressors that held them captives, and filled up the measure of their own iniquity by their resolution never to let them go, ch. xiv. 17. God will take care to send a victorious prince and army to Babylon, that shall *bring down all their nobles*, and lay their honour in the dust, and all their people too, even the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships, (for seamen are apt to be noisy,) or whose cry is to the ships as their refuge when the city is taken, that they may escape by the benefit of their great river. Note, The destruction of Babylon must make way for the enlargement of God's people. And in the prediction of the fall of the New Testament Babylon, we meet with the cries and lamentations of the sailors, Rev. xviii. 17. And observe, It is for Israel's sake that Babylon is ruined, to make way for their deliverance.

3. He reminds them of the great things he did for their fathers when he brought them out of the land of Egypt; for so it may be read, (v. 16, 17.) "*Thus saith the Lord, which did make a way in the sea, the Red sea, and did bring forth Pharaoh's chariot and horse, that they might lie down together in the bottom of the sea, and never rise, but be extinct; He that did this, can, if he pleases, make a way for you in the sea, when you return out of Babylon, and will do it rather than leave you there*." Note, For the encouragement of our faith and hope, it is god for us often to remember what God has done formerly for his people against his and their enemies. Think particularly what he did at the Red sea, how he made it, (1.) A road to his people, a straight way, a near way; nay, a refuge to them, into which they fled and were safe, the waters being a wall unto them. (2.) A grave to his enemies. The chariot and horse were drawn out by him who is Lord of all hosts, on purpose that they might fall together; howbeit, *they meant not so*, Mic. iv. 11, 12.

4. He promises to do yet greater things for them than he had done in the days of old; so that they should not have reason to ask, in a way of complaint, as Gideon did, *Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of?* For they should see them repeated, nay, they should see them outdone; (v. 18.) "*Remember not the former things*, from them to take occasion, as some do, to undervalue the present things, as if *the former days were better than these*; no, you may, if you will, comparatively forget them, and yet know enough by the events of your own day to convince you that the Lord is God alone; for, *behold, the Lord will do a new thing*, no way inferior, both for the wonder and the worth of the mercy, to the things of old." The best exposition of this is, Jer. xvi. 14, 15.—xxiii. 7, 8. *It shall no more be said, the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; that is an old thing, the remembrance of which will be in a man-*

ner lost in the new thing, in the new proof that the Lord liveth, for he brought up the children of Israel out of the land of the north. Though former mercies must not be forgotten, fresh mercies must in a special manner be improved. Now it springs forth, as it were, a surprise upon you; you are like them that dream, *Shall you not know it?* And will ye not own God's hand in it?

5. He promises not only to deliver them out of Babylon, but to conduct them safely and comfortably to their own land; (v. 19, 20.) *I will make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert*; for, it seems, the way from Babylon to Canaan, as well as from Egypt, lay through a desert land, which while the returning captives passed through, God would provide for them, that their camp should be both well victualled and under a good conduct. The same power that made a way in the sea, (v. 16.) can make a way in the wilderness, and will force its passage through the greatest difficulties. And he that made dry land in the waters, can produce waters in the driest land, in such abundance, as not only to give drink to his people, his chosen, but to the beasts of the field, also the dragons and the ostriches, who are therefore said to honour God for it; it is such a sensible refreshment, and yields them so much satisfaction, that, if they were capable of doing it, they would praise God for it, and shame man, who is made capable of praising his Benefactor, and does not. Now, (1.) This looks back to what God did for Israel, when he led them through the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan, and fetched water out of a rock to follow them; what God did for them formerly, he would do again, for he is still the same. And though we do not find that the miracle was repeated in their return out of Babylon, yet the mercy was in the common course of providence, for which it became them to be no less thankful to God. (2.) It looks forward, not only to all the instances of God's care of the Jewish church in the latter ages of it, betwixt their return from Babylon and the coming of Christ, but to the grace of the gospel, especially as it is manifested to the Gentile world, by which a way is opened in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert; the world, which lay like a desert, in ignorance and unfruitfulness, was blessed with divine direction and divine comforts, and, in order to both, with a plentiful effusion of the Spirit. The sinners of the Gentiles, who had been as the beasts of the field, running wild, fierce as the dragons, stupid as the owls or ostriches, shall be brought to honour God for the extent of his grace to his chosen among them.

6. He runs up all these promised blessings to their great original, the purposes and designs of his own glory; (v. 21.) *This people have I formed for myself, and therefore I do all this for them, that they may show forth my praise.* Note, (1.) The church is of God's forming, and so are all the living members of it. The new heavens, the new earth, the new man, are the work of God's hand, and are no more, no better, than he makes them; they are fashioned according to his will. (2.) He forms it for himself; he that is the first Cause, is the highest End, both of the first and of the new creation. *The Lord has made all things for himself*, his Israel especially, to be to him for a people, and for a name, and for a praise; and no otherwise can they be for him, or serviceable to him, than as his grace is glorified in them, Jer. xiii. 11. Eph. i. 6, 12, 14. (3.) It is therefore our duty to show forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to his service; as he formed us, so he feeds us, and keeps us, and leads us, and all for himself; for every instance therefore of his goodness we must praise him, else we answer not the end of the beings and blessings we have.

22. But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. 23. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt-offerings, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices: I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. 24. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. 25. *1, even I, am* he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. 26. Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified. 27. Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me. 28. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.

This charge (and a high charge it is, which is here exhibited against Jacob and Israel, God's professing people,) comes in here; 1. To clear God's justice in bringing them into captivity, and to vindicate that. Were they not in covenant with him? Had they not his sanctuary among them? *Why then did the Lord deal thus with the land?* Deut. xxix. 24. Here is a good reason given; they had neglected God and had cast him off, and therefore he justly rejected them, and gave them to the curse; (v. 28.) and they must be brought to own this before they are prepared for deliverance; and they did so, Dan. ix. 5. Neh. ix. 33. 2. To advance God's mercy in their deliverance, and to make that appear more glorious. Many things are before observed to magnify the power of God in it; but this magnifies his goodness, that he should do such great and kind things for a people that had been so very provoking to him, and were now suffering the just punishment of their iniquity. The pardoning of their sin was as great an instance of God's power (for so Moses reckons it, Numb. xiv. 17.) as the breaking of the yoke of their captivity. Now observe here,

I. What the sins are which they are here charged with;

1. Omissions of the good which God had commanded; and this part of the charge is here much insisted upon. And observe how it comes in with a but; compare v. 21. where God tells them what favours he had bestowed upon them, and what his just expectations were from them; he had formed them for himself, intending they should show forth his praise. But they had not done so; they had frustrated God's expectations from them, and made very ill returns to him for his favours. For, (1.) They had cast off prayer; *thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob.* Jacob was a man famous for prayer; (Hosea xii. 4.) his seed bore his name, but did not tread in his steps, and therefore are justly upbraided with it. God takes it ill when children degenerate from the virtue and devotion of their pious ancestors. To boast of the name of Jacob, and yet live without prayer, is to mock God, and deceive ourselves. If Jacob does not call upon God, who will? (2.) They were grown weary of their religion; *"Thou art Israel, the seed not only of a praying but of a prevailing father, that was a prince with God; and yet, not valuing his experiences any more than his example, thou hast been weary of me."* They

had been in relation to God, employed in his service, and in communion with him; but they began to snuff at it, and to say, *Behold, what a weariness is it!* Note, Those who neglect to call upon God, do in effect tell him they are weary of him, and have a mind to change their Master. (3.) They grudged the expense of their devotion, and were niggardly and penurious in it; they were for a cheap religion; and in those acts of devotion that were costly they desired to be excused: they had not brought, no not their small cattle, the lambs and kids, which God required for *burnt-offerings*, (v. 23.) much less did they bring their greater cattle; pretending they could not spare them, they must have them for the maintenance of their families. So little sense had they of the greatness of God and their obligations to him, that they could not find in their hearts to part with a lamb out of their flock for his honour, though he called for it and would graciously accept it. *Sweet cane*, or *calamus*, was used for the holy oil, incense, and perfume; but they were not willing to be at the charge of that; (v. 24.) what they had must serve; though it was old and good for nothing, they would not buy fresh. Perhaps it was usual for devout pious persons to bring free-will incense, as well as other free-will offerings; but they were not so generous, nor did they fill the altar of God, nor moisten it abundantly, as they should have done, with the fat of their sacrifices; what sacrifices they did bring were of the lean and refuse of their cattle, that had no fat in them to regale the altar with. (4.) What sacrifices they did offer they did not honour God with them, and so they were, in effect, as no sacrifices; (v. 23.) *Neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices*. Some of them offered their sacrifices to false gods; others, who offered them to the true God, were either careless in the manner of it, or hypocritical in their intentions; so that they might be truly said not to honour God with them, but rather to dishonour him.

And that which aggravated their neglect of sacrificing, was, that, as God had appointed it, it was no burthensome thing; it was not a service that they had any reason at all to complain of; *"I have not caused thee to serve with an offering; I have not made it a task and drudgery to you, whatever you, through the corruption of your natures, have made it yourselves. I have not wearied thee with incense."* None of God's commandments are grievous, no, not those concerning sacrifice and incense. They were not more costly than might be afforded by them that lived in such a plentiful country; nor did their attendance on them require any more time than they could well spare. But that which especially forbade them to call it *a wearisome service*, was, that they were required to be cheerful and pleasant, and to rejoice before God in all their approaches to him, Deut. xii. 12. They had many feasts and good days; but only one day in all the year in which they were to afflict their souls. The ordinances of the ceremonial law, though, in comparison with Christ's easy yoke, they are spoken of as heavy, (Acts xv. 10.) yet, in comparison with the service that idolaters did to their false gods, they were light, and not to be called *services*, or found fault with as wearisome. God did not require them to sacrifice their children, as Moloch did.

2. Commissions of the evil which God had forbidden; and omissions commonly make way for commissions; *Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins*. When we make God's gifts the food and fuel of our lusts, and his providence the patron of our wicked projects, especially when we encourage ourselves to continue in sin, because grace has abounded, then we make God to serve with our sins: or, it may denote what a grief and burthen sin is to God; it not only wearies men and makes the creation groan, but

it wearies my God also, (ch. vii. 13.) and makes the Creator complain that he is *grieved*, (Ps. xcv. 10.) that he is *broken*, (Ezek. vi. 9.) that he is pressed with sinners as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves, (Amos ii. 13.) and to cry out, *Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries*, ch. i. 24. The antithesis is observable; God has not made them to serve with their sacrifices, but they had made him to serve with their sins. The master had not tired the servants with his commands, but they had tired him with their disobedience. Those are wicked servants indeed, that carry it so ill to so good a Master. God is tender of our comfort, but we are careless of his honour. Let this engage us to keep close to our duty, that it is easy and reasonable, and no disparagement to us, nor too hard for us.

II. What were the aggravations of their sin, v. 27. 1. That they were children of disobedience; for their first father, their forefathers, had sinned; and they had not only sinned in their loins, but sinned like them. Ezra confesses this; *Since the days of our fathers have been in a great trespass*, ch. ix. 7. But their forefathers are called their first father, to put us in mind of the apostasy and rebellion of our first father Adam, to which corrupt fountain we must trace up the streams of all our transgressions.

2. That they were scholars of disobedience too, for their teachers had transgressed against God; were guilty of gross, scandalous sins, and the people, no doubt, would learn to do as they did. It is ill with a people when their leaders cause them to err, and their teachers, who should reform them, corrupt them.

III. What were the tokens of God's displeasure against them for their sins, v. 28. He brought ruin both upon church and state: 1. The honour of their church was laid in the dust and trampled on; *I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary*, the priests and Levites who presided with great dignity and power in the temple-service; they profaned themselves, and made themselves vile, by their enormities; and then God profaned them, and made them vile, by their calamities and the contempt they fell into, Mal. ii. 9. 2. The honour of their state was ruined likewise; *"I have given Jacob to the curse, to be cursed, and hated, and abused, by all their neighbours; and Israel to reproach, to be insulted, ridiculed, and triumphed over, by their enemies."* They reproached them perhaps for that in them that was good, they *mocked at their sabbaths*; (Lam. i. 7.) but God gave them up to reproach, to correct them for what was amiss. Note, The dishonour which men at any time do us, should humble us for the dishonour we have done to God; and therefore we must bear it patiently, because we suffer it justly; and must acknowledge that to us belongs confusion.

IV. What were the riches of God's mercy toward them notwithstanding; (v. 25.) *I, even I, am he who yet blotteth out thy transgressions*. This gracious declaration of God's readiness to pardon sin comes in very strangely: the charge ran very high, *Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities*, v. 24. Now one would think it should follow, *"I, even I, am he that will destroy thee, and burthen myself no longer with care about thee."* No, *I, even I, am he that will forgive thee*; as if the great God would teach us, that forgiving injuries is the best way to make ourselves easy, and to keep ourselves from being wearied with them. This comes in here, to encourage them to repent, because there is forgiveness with God, and to show the freeness of divine mercy; where sin has been exceeding sinful, grace appears exceeding gracious. Apply this, 1. To the forgiving of the sins of Israel, as a people in their national capacity: when God stopped the course of

threatening judgments, and saved them from utter ruin, even then when he had them under severe rebukes, then he might be said to *blot out their transgressions*; though he corrected them, he was reconciled to them again, and did not cut them off from being a people. This he did many a time, till they rejected Christ and his gospel, which was a sin against the remedy, and then he would forgive them no more as a nation, but utterly destroyed them. 2. To the forgiving of the sins of every particular believing penitent; transgressions and sins, infirmities though ever so numerous, backslidings though ever so heinous. Observe here, (1.) How the pardon is expressed; he will *blot them out*, as a cloud is blotted out by the beams of the sun; (*ch. xlv. 22.*) as a debt is blotted out, not to appear against the debtor; the book is crossed as if the debt were paid, because it is pardoned, upon the payment which the surety has made; or as a sentence is blotted out when it is reversed; as the curse was blotted out with the waters of jealousy, which made it of no effect to the innocent, Num. v. 23. He will not *remember* the sin; which intimates not only that he will remit the punishment of what is past, but that it shall be no diminution of his love for the future. When God forgives, he forgets. (2.) What is the ground and reason of the pardon. It is not for the sake of any thing in us, but for his own sake; for his mercies' sake, his promise sake, and especially for his Son's sake, and that he may himself be glorified in it. (3.) How God glories in it; *I, even I, am he*; he glories in it as his prerogative; none can forgive sin but God only, and he will do it, it is his settled resolution, he will do it willingly and with delight; it is his pleasure, it is his honour; so he is pleased to reckon it.

Those words, (*v. 26.*) *put me in remembrance*, may be understood either, [1.] As a rebuke to a proud Pharisee, that stands upon his own justification before God, and expects to find favour for his merits, and not to be beholden to free grace; "If you have any thing to say in your own justification, any thing to offer for the sake of which you should be pardoned, and not for my sake, put me in remembrance of it; I will give you leave to plead your own cause with me, declare what your merits are, that you may be justified by them;" but those who are thus challenged will be speechless. Or, [2.] As a direction and encouragement to a penitent publican. Is God thus ready to pardon sin, and, when he pardons it, will he remember it no more? Let us then put him in remembrance, mention before him those sins which he has forgiven; for they must be ever before us, to humble us, though they are pardoned, Ps. li. 3. Put him in remembrance of the promises he has made to the penitent, and the satisfaction his Son has made for them. Plead these with him in wrestling for pardon, and declare these things, in order that thou mayest be justified freely by his grace. This is the only way, and it is a sure way, to peace; *only acknowledge thy transgression.*

## CHAP. XLIV.

God by the prophet, goes on, in this chapter, as before, I. To encourage his people with the assurance of great blessings he had in store for them at their return out of captivity, and those typical of much greater, which the gospel-church, his spiritual Israel, should partake of in the days of the Messiah: and hereby he proves himself to be God alone against all pretenders, v. 1.-8. II. To expose the sottishness and amazing folly of idol-makers, and idol-worshippers, v. 9.-20. III. To ratify and confirm the assurances he had given to his people of those great blessings, and to raise their joyful and believing expectations of them, v. 21.-28.

I. **YET** now hear, O Jacob my servant: and Israel, whom I have chosen:

2. Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, *which* will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. 3. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: 4. And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. 5. One shall say, *I am* the LORD's; and another shall call *himself* by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe *with* his hand unto the LORD, and surname *himself* by the name of Israel. 6. Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the LORD of hosts: *I am* the first, and *I am* the last; and besides me *there* is no God. 7. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them. 8. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared *it*? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? yea, *there is* no God; I know not *any*.

Two great truths are abundantly made out in these verses:

I. That the people of God are a happy people, especially upon account of the covenant that is between them and God. The people of Israel were so as a figure of the gospel-Israel.

Three things complete their happiness:

1. The covenant-relations wherein they stand to God, v. 1, 2. Israel is here called *Jesurun—the upright one*; for these only, like Nathanael, are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile; and these only shall have the everlasting benefit of these promises. Jacob and Israel had been represented, in the close of the foregoing chapter, as very provoking and obnoxious to God's wrath, and already given to the curse and to reproaches; but, as if God's bowels yearned toward him, and his repentings were kindled together, mercy steps in with a *non-obstante—notwithstanding*, to all these quarrels; *Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant*; thou and I will be friends again for all this. God had said, (*ch. xliii. 25.*) *I am he that blotteth out all thy transgression*, which is the only thing that creates this distance; and when that is taken away, the streams of mercy run again in their former channel. The pardon of sin is the inlet of all the other blessings of the covenant; So and so I will do for them, says God, (*Heb. viii. 12.*) *for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness*; therefore hear, O Jacob; hear these comfortable words; therefore fear not, O Jacob; fear not thy sins, for they are pardoned; fear not thy troubles, for by the pardon of sin the property of them too is altered.

Now the relations wherein they stand to him are very encouraging. (1.) They are his *servants*; and those that serve him he will own and stand by, and see that they be not wronged. (2.) They are his *chosen*, and he will abide by his choice; he knows them that are his, and whom he has chosen he takes under special protection. (3.) They are his *creatures*; he made them, and brought them into being; he formed them, and cast them into shape; he began his times with them, for he formed them from the



womb; and therefore he will help them over their difficulties, and help them in their services.

2. The covenant-blessings which he has secured to them and theirs, *v. 3, 4.* (1.) They that are sensible of their spiritual wants, and the insufficiency of the creature to supply them, shall have abundant satisfaction in God; *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty*, that thirsts after righteousness; he shall be filled. Water shall be poured out to those who truly desire spiritual blessings above all the delights of sense. (2.) They that are barren as the dry ground shall be watered with the grace of God, with floods of that grace, and God will himself give the increase. If the ground be ever so dry, God has floods of grace to water it with. (3.) The water God will *pour out* is, *his Spirit*, (John vii. 39.) which God will pour out without measure upon the Seed, that is, Christ, (Gal. iii. 16.) and by measure upon all the seed of the faithful, upon all the praying, wrestling seed of Jacob, Luke xi. 13. This is the great New Testament promise, that God, having sent his Servant Christ, and upheld him, will send his Spirit to uphold us. (4.) This gift of the Holy Ghost is the great blessing God had reserved the plentiful effusion of for the latter days; *I will pour my Spirit, my blessing*; for where God gives his Spirit, he will give all other blessings. (5.) This is reserved for the seed and offspring of the church; for so the covenant of grace runs, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed*. To all who are thus made to partake of the privileges of adoption, God will give the spirit of adoption. (6.) Hereby there shall be a great increase of the church; thus it shall be spread to distant places. Thus it shall be propagated and perpetuated to after-times; they shall spring up, and grow as fast as willows by the water-courses, and in every thing that is virtuous and praiseworthy shall be eminent, and excel all about them, as the willows overtop the grass among which they grow, *v. 4.* Note, It is a great happiness to the church, and a great pleasure to good men, to see the rising generation hopeful and promising. And it will be so if God pour his Spirit upon them, that blessing, that blessing of blessings.

3. The consent they cheerfully give to their part of the covenant, *v. 5.* When the Jews returned out of captivity, they renewed their covenant with God, (Jer. i. 5.) particularly that they would have no more to do with idols, Hos. xiv. 2, 3. 8. Backsliders must thus repent, and do their first works. Many of those that were without, did at that time join themselves to them, invited by that glorious appearance of God for them, Zech. viii. 23. Esth. viii. 17. And they say, *We are the Lord's, and call themselves by the name of Jacob*; for there was one law, one covenant, *for the stranger and for those that were born in the land*. And doubtless it looks further yet, to the conversion of the Gentiles, and the multitudes of them who, upon the effusion of the Spirit, after Christ's ascension, should be *joined to the Lord, and added to the church*. These converts are *one and another*, very many, of different ranks and nations, and all welcome to God, Col. iii. 11. When one does it, another shall by his example be invited to do it, and then another; thus the zeal of one may provoke many. (1.) They shall resign themselves to God: not one in the name of the rest, but every one for himself shall say, "I am the Lord's; he has an incontestable right to rule me, and I submit to him, to all his commands, to all his disposals. I am, and will be, his only, his wholly, his for ever; will be for his interests, will be for his praise; living and dying I will be his." (2.) They shall incorporate themselves with the people of God, *call themselves by the name of Jacob*, forgetting their own people and their father's

house, and desirous to wear the character and livery of God's family. They shall love all God's people, shall associate with them, give them the right hand of fellowship, espouse their cause, seek the good of the church in general, and of all the particular members of it, and be willing to take their lot with them in all conditions. (3.) They shall do this very solemnly; some of them shall *subscribe with their hand unto the Lord*, as, for the confirming of a bargain, a man sets his hand to it, and delivers it as his act and deed. The more express we are in our covenanting with God, the better; Exod. xxiv. 7. Josh. xxiv. 26, 27. Neh. ix. 38. Fast bind, fast find.

II. That, as the Israel of God are a happy people, so the God of Israel is a great God, and he is God alone. This also, as the former, speaks abundant satisfaction to all that trust in him, *v. 6.—8.* Observe here, to God's glory and our comfort,

1. That, the God we trust in is a God of incontestable sovereignty and irresistible power. He is the Lord, Jehovah, self-existent and self-sufficient; and he is the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts of heaven and earth, of angels and men.

2. That he stands in relation to, and has a particular concern for, his church. He is the King of Israel and his Redeemer; *therefore* his Redeemer, because his King; and those that take God for their King shall have him for their Redeemer. When God would assert himself God alone, he proclaims himself Israel's God, that his people may be encouraged both to adhere to him and to triumph in him.

3. That he is eternal; the first and the last. He is God *from* everlasting, before the worlds were, and will be so *to* everlasting, when the world shall be no more. If there were not a God to create, nothing had ever been; and if there were not a God to uphold, all would soon come to nothing again. He is all in all; is the first Cause, from whom are all things, and the last End, to and for whom are all things; (Rom. xi. 36.) the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, Rev. i. 11.

4. That he is God alone; (*v. 6.*) *Beside me there is no God. Is there a God beside me?* *v. 8.* We will appeal to the greatest scholars. Did they ever in all their reading meet with any other? To those that have the largest acquaintance with the world: did they ever meet with any other? There are *gods many*, (1 Cor. viii. 5, 6.) *called gods*, and counterfeit gods; but is there any, beside our God, that is infinite and eternal; any, beside him, that is the Creator of the world, and the Protector and Benefactor of the whole creation; any, beside him, that can do that for their worshippers which he can and will do for his? "Ye are my witnesses. I have been a Nonsuch to you. You have tried other gods; have you found any of them all-sufficient to you, or any of them like me? Yea, there is no god;" *no rock*, so the word is; none besides that can be a rock for a foundation to build on, a rock for shelter to flee to. God is the Rock, and *their rock is not as ours*, Deut. xxxii. 4, 31. I know not any; as if he had said, "I never met with any that offered to stand in competition with me, or that durst bring their pretensions to a fair trial; if I did know of any that could befriend you better than I can, I would recommend you to them; but I know not any." There is no God beside Jehovah; he is infinite, and therefore there can be no other; he is all-sufficient, and therefore there needs no other. This is designed for the confirming of the hopes of God's people in the promise of their deliverance out of Babylon, and, in order to that, for the curing them of their idolatry; when the affliction had done its work, it should be removed. They are reminded of the first and great article of their creed, that *the Lord their God is one Lord*, Deut. vi. 4. And therefore,

(1.) They needed not to hope in any other god; those on whom the sun shines, need neither moon nor stars, nor the light of their own fire. (2.) They needed not to fear any other god; their own God was more able to do them good than all the false and counterfeit gods of their enemies were to do them hurt.

5. That none besides could foretell these things to come, which God now by his prophet gave notice of to the world, above two hundred years before they came to pass; (*v. 7.*) "*Who, as I, shall call, shall call Cyrus to Babylon, shall call Israel out of Babylon?*" Is there any but God that can call effectually, and has every creature, every heart, at his beck? Who shall declare it, how it shall be, and by whom, as I do?" Nay, God goes further; he not only sees it in order, as having the fore-knowledge of it, but sets it in order, as having the sole management and direction of it. Can any other pretend to this? He has always set things in order according to the counsel of his own will, ever since he appointed the ancient people, the people of Israel, who could give a truer and fuller account of the antiquities of their own nation than any kingdom in the world could. Ever since he appointed that people to be his peculiar people, his providence was particularly conversant about them, and he told them beforehand the events that should occur respecting them—their bondage in Egypt, their deliverance, and their settlement in Canaan. All was set in order in the divine predictions as well as in the divine purposes. Could any other have done so? Would any other have been so far concerned for them? He challenges the pretenders to show the things that shall come hereafter; "Let them, if they can, tell us the name of the man that shall destroy Babylon, and deliver Israel? Nay, if they cannot pretend to tell us the things that shall come hereafter, let them tell us the things that are coming, that are nigh at hand, and at the door; let them tell us what shall come to pass to-morrow; but they cannot do that; fear them not therefore, nor be afraid of them. What harm can they do you? What hinderance can they give to your deliverance, when I have told thee it shall be accomplished in its season, and I have solemnly declared it?" Note, Those who have the word of God's promise to depend upon, need not to be afraid of any adverse powers or policies whatsoever.

9. They that make a graven image *are* all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit: and they *are* their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. 10. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image *that* is profitable for nothing? 11. Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed; and the workmen, they *are* of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; *yet* they shall fear, *and* they shall be ashamed together. 12. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint. 13. The carpenter stretcheth out *his* rule, he marketh it out with a line, he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the

house. 14. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish *it*. 15. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof and warm himself; yea, he kindleth *it*, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth *it*: he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. 16. He burneth part thereof in the fire: with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied; yea, he warmeth *himself*, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: 17. And the residue thereof he maketh a god, *even* his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth *it*, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. 18. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; *and* their hearts, that they cannot understand. 19. And none considereth in his heart, neither *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burnt part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten *it*; and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? 20. He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, *Is there* not a lie in my right hand?

Often before, God, by the prophet, had mentioned the folly and strange sottishness of idolaters; but here he enlarges upon that head, and very fully and particularly exposes it to contempt and ridicule. This discourse is intended, 1. To arm the people of Israel against the strong temptation they would be in to worship idols, when they were captives in Babylon, in compliance with the custom of the country, (they being far from the city of their own solemnities,) and to humour those who were now their lords and masters. 2. To cure them of their inclination to idolatry, which was the sin that did most easily beset them, and to reform them from which they were sent into Babylon. As the rod of God is of use to *enforce* the word, so the word of God is of use to *explain* the rod, that the voice of both together may be heard and answered. 3. To furnish them with something to say to their Chaldean task-masters. When they insulted over them, when they asked, *Where is your God?* they might from hence ask them, *What are your Gods?* 4. To take off their fear of the gods of their enemies, and to encourage their hope in their own God, that he would certainly appear against those who set up such scandalous competitors as these with him for the throne.

Now here, for the conviction of idolaters, we have,

I. A challenge given to them to clear themselves, if they can, from the imputation of the most shameful folly and senselessness imaginable, *v. 9.—11.* They set their wits on work to contrive, and their hands on work to frame, graven images, and they call them *their delectable things*; extremely fond they are of them, and mighty things they expect from them. Note, Through the corruption of men's nature, those things which should be detestable to

them are desirable and delectable; but those are far gone in a distemper, to whom that which is the food and fuel of it is most agreeable. Now, 1. We tell them that they that do so are all vanity, they deceive themselves and one another, and put a great cheat upon those for whom they make these images. 2. We tell them that *their delectable things shall not profit them*, nor make them any return for the pleasure they take in them; they can neither supply them with good, nor protect them from evil. The *graven images are profitable for nothing* at all, nor will they ever get any thing by the devoirs they pay to them. 3. We appeal to themselves, whether it be not a silly, sottish thing to expect any good from gods of their own making; *they are their own witnesses*, witnesses against themselves, if they would but give their own consciences leave to deal faithfully with them, that they are blind and ignorant in doing thus; *they see not nor know*, and let them own it, *that they may be ashamed*. If men would but be true to their own convictions, ordinarily we might be sure of their conversion, particularly idolaters; for *who has formed a god?* Who but a madman, or one out of his wits, would think of forming a god, of making that which, if he made it a god, he must suppose to be his maker? 4. We challenge them to plead their own cause with any confidence or assurance. If any one has the front to say that he has formed a god, when all his fellows come together to declare what each of them has done toward the making of this god, they will all be ashamed of the cheat they have put upon themselves, and laugh in their sleeves at those whom they have imposed upon; for the workmen that formed this god are of men, weak and impotent, and therefore cannot possibly make a being that shall be omnipotent, nor can they, without blushing, pretend to it; let them all be gathered together, as Demetrius and the craftsmen were, to support their saking trade, let them stand up to plead their own cause, and make the best they can of it, with hand joined in hand; yet they shall fear to undertake it, when it comes to the setting to, as conscious to themselves of the weakness and badness of their cause; and they shall be ashamed of it, not only when they appear singly, but when by appearing together they hope to keep one another in countenance. Note, Idolatry and impiety are things which men may justly both tremble and blush to appear in the defence of.

II. A particular narrative of the whole proceeding in making a god; and there needs no more to expose it than to describe it, and tell the story of it.

1. The persons employed about it are handicraft tradesmen, the meanest of them, the very same that you would employ in making the common utensils of your husbandry, a cart or a plough. You must have a smith, a blacksmith, who with the tongs works in the coals; and it is hard work, for he works with the strength of his arms, till he is hungry, and his strength fails, so eager is he, and so hasty are those who set him at the work, to get it despatched. He cannot allow himself time to eat or drink, for he drinks no water, and therefore is faint, v. 12. Perhaps it was a piece of superstition among them, for the workman not to eat or drink while he was making a god. The plates with which the smith was to cover the image, or whatever iron-work was to be done about it, he fashioned it with hammers, and made it all very exact, according to the model given him. Then comes the carpenter, and he takes as much care and pains about the timber-work, v. 13. He brings his box of tools, for he has occasion for them all; he stretches out his rule upon the piece of wood, marks it with a line, where it must be sawed or cut off; he fits it, or polishes it, with planes, the greater

first, and then the less; he marks out with the compass what must be the size and shape of it; and it is just what he pleases.

2. The form in which it is made, is that of a man, a poor, weak, dying creature; but it is the noblest form and figure that he is acquainted with, and, being his own, he has a peculiar fondness for it, and is willing to put all the reputation he can upon it. He makes it according to the beauty of a man, in comely proportion, with those limbs and lineaments that are the beauty of a man, but are altogether unfit to represent the beauty of the Lord. God put a great honour upon man, when, in respect of the powers and faculties of his soul, he made him after the image of God; but man does a great dishonour to God, when he makes him, in respect of bodily parts and members, after the image of man. Nor will it at all atone for the affront, so far to compliment his god, as to take the fairest of the children of men for his original, whence to take his copy, and to give him all the beauty of a man that he can think of; for all the *beauty of the body of a man*, when pretended to be put upon him who is an infinite Spirit, is a deformity and diminution to him. And when the godly piece is finished, it must remain in the house, in the temple or shrine prepared for it, or perhaps in the dwelling-house, if it be one of the *lares or penates—the household gods*.

3. The matter of which it is mostly made is sorry stuff to make a god of; it is the stock of a tree.

(1.) The tree itself was fetched out of the forest, where it grew among other trees, of no more virtue or value than its neighbours. It was a cedar, it may be, or a cypress, or an oak; (v. 14.) perhaps he had an eye upon it some time before for this use, and strengthened it for himself, used some art or other to make it stronger and better grown than other trees were. Or, as some read it, which hath strengthened or lift up itself among the trees of the forest, the tallest and strongest he can pick out. Or, it may be, it pleases his fancy better to take an ash, which is of a quicker growth, and which was of his own planting, for this use, and which has been nourished with rain from heaven. See what a fallacy he puts upon himself, in making that his refuge, which was of his own planting, and which he not only gave the form to, but prepared the matter for. And what an affront he puts upon the God of heaven, in setting up that as a rival with him, which was nourished by his rain, that rain which falls upon the just and unjust.

(2.) The houghs of this tree were good for nothing but for fuel; to that use were they put, and so were the chips that were cut off from it in the working of it; they are for a man to burn, v. 15, 16. And to show that that tree has no innate virtue in it for its own protection, it is as capable of being burnt as any other tree; and to show that he who chose it had no more antecedent value for it than for any other tree, he makes no difficulty of throwing part of it into the fire as common rubbish, asking no question for conscience-sake. [1.] It serves him for his parlour-fire; he will take thereof, and warm himself, (v. 15.) and he finds the comfort of it, and is so far from having any regret in his mind for it, that he saith, *Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire*; and certainly that part of the tree which served him for fuel, the use for which God and nature designed it, does him a much greater kindness, and yields him more satisfaction, than ever that will which he makes a god of. [2.] It serves him for his kitchen-fire; he eats flesh with it, that is, he dresses the flesh with it, which he is to eat, he roasteth roast, and is satisfied that he has not done amiss to put it to this use. Nay, [3.] It serves him to heat the oven with, in which we use that fuel which is of least value; he kindles it, and bakes

bread with the heat of it, and none charges him with doing wrong.

(3.) Yet, after all, the stock or body of the tree shall serve to make a god of, when it might as well have served to make a bench, as one of themselves, even a poet of their own, upbraids them, *Horat. Sat. i. 8.*

*Olim truncus eram scilicet, inutile lignum,  
Quoniam labor, incertus scilicet scilicet Priapum,  
Maluit esse deum; deus nunc ego.*

In days of yore our godship stood  
A very worthless log of wood,  
The joiner, doubting or to shape us  
Into a stool, or a Priapus,  
At length resolv'd, for reasons wise,  
Into a god to bid me rise.

FRANCIS.

And another of them threatens the idol to whom he had committed the custody of his woods, that if he did not preserve them to be fuel for his fire, he should himself be made use of for that purpose:

*Furaces moneo mantis repellas,  
Et silvam dominici focis reserves,  
Si defecerit hæc, et ipse lignum es.*

MARTIAL.

Drive the plunderers away, and preserve the wood for thy master's hearth, or thou thyself shalt be converted into fuel.

When the besotted idolater has thus served the meanest purposes with part of his tree, and the rest has had time to season, (he makes that a god in his imagination, while that is in the doing, *and worships it*,) he makes it a *graven image*, and falls down thereto, (v. 15.) that is, (v. 17.) *The residue thereof he makes a god, even his graven image*, according to his fancy and intention; he falls down to it, and worships it, gives divine honours to it, prostrates himself before it in the most humble, reverent posture, as a servant, as a suppliant; he prays to it, as having a dependence upon it, and great expectations from it; *he saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god.* There where he pays his homage and allegiance, he justly looks for protection and deliverance. What a strange infatuation is this, to expect help from gods that cannot help themselves! But it is this praying to them that makes them gods, not what the smith or the carpenter did at them. What we place our confidence in for deliverance, that we make a god of.

*Qui fingit sacros, aut vel marmore, vultus,  
Non facit ille deos; qui rogat, ille facit.*

MARTIAL.

He who supplants the figure, whether it be of gold or of marble, makes it a god, and not he who merely constructs it.

III. Here is judgment given upon this whole matter, v. 18.—20. In short, it is the effect and evidence of the greatest stupidity and sottishness that one could ever imagine rational beings to be guilty of, and shows that man is become worse than the beasts that perish; for they act according to the dictates of sense; but man acts not according to the dictates of reason; (v. 18.) *They have not known nor understood common sense*; men that act rationally in other things, in this act most absurdly. Though they have some knowledge and understanding, yet they are strangers to, nay they are rebels against, the great law of consideration; (v. 19.) *None considers in his heart*, nor has so much application of mind as to reason thus with himself, which one would think he might easily do, though there were none to reason with him; “I have burnt part of this tree in the fire, for baking and roasting; and now shall I make the residue thereof an abomination—an idol?” (For that is an abomination to God, and all wise and good men.) “Shall I ungratefully choose to do, or presumptuously dare to do, what the Lord hates? Shall I be such a fool as to fall down to the stock of a tree—a senseless, lifeless, helpless thing? Shall I so far disparage myself, and make myself like that I bow down to?” A growing tree may be a beautiful, stately thing, but the stock

of a tree has lost its glory, and he has lost his that gives glory to it.

Upon the whole, the sad character given of these idolaters, (v. 20.) is, 1. That they put a cheat upon themselves; *they feed on ashes*; they feed themselves with hopes of advantage by worshipping these idols; but they will be disappointed as much as a man that would expect nourishment by feeding on ashes. Feeding on ashes is an evidence of a depraved appetite and a distempered body; and it is a sign that the soul is overpowered by very bad habits, when men, in their worship, go no further than the sight of their eyes will carry them. They are wretchedly deluded, and it is their own fault; a *deceived heart* of their own, more than the deceiving tongue of others, *has turned them aside* from the faith and worship of the living God to dumb idols. They are *drawn away of their own lusts, and enticed.* The apostacy of sinners from God is owing entirely to themselves, and to the evil heart of unbelief that is in their own bosom. A revolting and rebellious heart is a deceived heart. 2. That they wilfully persist in their self-delusion, and will not be undeceived. There is none of them that can be persuaded so far to suspect himself as to say, *Is there not a lie in my right hand?* and so to think of delivering his soul. Note, (1.) Idolaters have a lie in their right hand; for an idol is a lie, is not what it pretends, performs not what it promises, and it is a *teacher of lies*, Hab. ii. 18. (2.) It highly concerns those that are secure in an evil way, seriously to consider whether there be not a lie in their right hand. Is not that a lie which with complacency we hold fast as our chief good? Are our hearts set upon the wealth of the world, and the pleasures of sense? They will certainly prove a lie in our right hand. And is not that a lie which with confidence we hold fast by, as the ground on which we build our hopes of heaven? If we trust to our external professions and performances, as if those would save us, we deceive ourselves with a lie in our right hand, with a house built on the sand. (3.) Self-suspicion is the first step toward self-deliverance. We cannot be faithful to ourselves, unless we are jealous of ourselves. He that would deliver his soul must begin with the putting of this question to his own conscience, *Is there not a lie in my right hand?* (4.) Those that are given up to believe a lie, are under the power of strong delusions, which it is hard to get clear of, 2 Thess. ii. 11.

21. Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou *art* my servant: I have formed thee; thou *art* my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. 22. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. 23. Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree them: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel. 24. Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I *am* the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; 25. That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise *men* backward, and maketh

their knowledge foolish: 26. That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers, that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: 27. That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: 28. That saith of Cyrus, *He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure*: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

In these verses we have,

I. The *duty* which Jacob and Israel, now in captivity, are called to, that they might be qualified and prepared for the deliverance designed them. Our first care must be to get good by our afflictions, and then we may hope to get out of them. The duty is expressed in two words, *Remember* and *Return*, as in the counsel to Ephesus, Rev. ii. 4, 5. 1. "Remember these, O Jacob; remember what thou hast been told of the folly of idolatry, and let the convictions thou art now under be ready to thee whenever thou art tempted to that sin. Remember that thou art my servant, and therefore must not serve other masters." 2. *Return unto me*, v. 22. It is the great concern of those who have backslidden from God, to hasten their return to him; and this is that which he calls them to, when they are in affliction, and when he is returning to them in a way of mercy.

II. The *favours* which Jacob and Israel, now in captivity, are assured of; and what is here promised to them upon their remembering and returning to God, is in a spiritual sense promised to all that in like manner return to God. It is a very comfortable word, for more is implied in it than is expressed; (v. 21.) "*O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me, though for the present thou seem to be so.*" When we begin to remember God, he will begin to remember us, nay, it is he that remembers us first. Now observe here,

1. The grounds upon which God's favourable intentions to his people were built, and on which they might build their expectations from him. He will deliver them out of captivity; for, (1.) They are his servants, and therefore he has a just quarrel with those that detain them; *Let my people go, that they may serve me*. The servants of the King of kings are under special protection. (2.) He formed them into a people, formed them *from the womb*, v. 24. From the first beginning of their increase into a nation, they were under his particular care and government, more than any other people; their national constitution was of his framing, and his covenant with them was the charter by which they were incorporated. They are his, and he will save them. (3.) He has redeemed them formerly, has many a time redeemed them out of great distress, and he is still the same, in the same relation to them, has the same concern for them. "Therefore return unto me, for I have redeemed thee, v. 22. Whither wilt thou go, but to me?" Having redeemed them as well as formed them, he has acquired a further title to them, and property in them, which is a good reason why they should dutifully return to him, and why he will graciously return to them. The *Lord has redeemed Jacob*, he is about to do it, (v. 24.) he is determined to do it; for he is the Lord their Redeemer, v. 24. Note, The work of redemption which God has by his Son wrought for us, encourages us to hope for all promised blessings from him. He that has redeemed us at so vast an expense, will

not lose his purchase. (4.) He has *glorified himself in them*, (v. 23.) and therefore will do so still, John xii. 28. It is matter of comfort to us to see God's glory interested in the deliverances of the church; for *therefore* he will certainly redeem Jacob, because thus he will glorify himself. And *this* assures us that he will perfect the redemption of his saints by Jesus Christ, because there is a day set when he will be glorified and admired in them all. (5.) He has pardoned their sins, which were the cause of their calamity, and the only obstruction to their deliverance, v. 22. *Therefore* he will break the yoke of captivity from off their necks, because he has *blotted out, as a thick cloud, their transgressions*. Note, [1.] Our transgressions and our sins are as a cloud, a thick cloud; they interpose between heaven and earth, and for a time suspend and intercept the correspondence between the upper and lower world; (sin *separates between us and God*, ch. lix. 1.) they threaten a storm, a deluge of wrath, as thick clouds do, which God will rain upon sinners, Ps. xi. 6. [2.] When God pardons sin, he blots out this cloud, this thick cloud, so that the intercourse with heaven is laid open again. God looks down upon the soul with favour, the soul looks up to him with pleasure. The cloud is scattered by the influence of the Sun of righteousness. It is only through Christ that sin is pardoned. When sin is pardoned, like a cloud that is scattered, it appears no more, it is quite gone; *the iniquity of Jacob shall be sought for, and not found*, Jer. i. 20. And the comforts that flow into the soul when sin is pardoned, are like *clear shining after clouds and rain*.

2. The universal joy which the deliverance of God's people should bring along with it; (v. 23.) *Sing, O ye heavens*. This intimates, (1.) That the whole creation shall have cause for joy and rejoicing in the redemption of God's people; to that it is owing, that it subsists, (that it is rescued from the curse which the sin of man brought upon the ground,) and that it is again put into a capacity of answering the ends of its being, and is assured, that though now it groans, being burthened, it shall at last be delivered from the bondage of corruption. The greatest establishment of the world is the kingdom of God in it, Ps. xcvi. 11, 13.—xcviii. 7, 9. (2.) That the angels shall rejoice in it, and the inhabitants of the upper world. The heavens shall sing, for the Lord has done it. And there is joy in heaven when God and man are reconciled, (Luke xv. 7.) and when Babylon falls, Rev. xviii. 20. (3.) That those who lay at the greatest distance, even the inhabitants of the Gentile world, should join in these praises, as sharing in these joys. The *lower parts of the earth*, the forest and the trees there, shall bring in the tribute of thanksgiving for the redemption of Israel.

3. The encouragement we have to hope, that, though great difficulties, and such as have been thought insuperable, lie in the way of the church's deliverance, yet, when the time for it is come, they shall all be got over with ease, for *thus saith Israel's Redeemer, I am the Lord that maketh all things*, did make them at first, and am still making them; for providence is a continued creation; all being, power, life, motion, and perfection, are from him. He *stretched forth the heavens alone*, has no help, nor needs any; and the earth too he *spreads abroad by himself*, and by his own power. Man was not by him when he did it, (Job xxxviii. 4.) nor did any creature advise or assist; only his own eternal Wisdom and Word was by him then as *one brought up with him*, Prov. viii. 30. His stretching out the heavens by himself speaks the boundless extent of his power. The strongest man, if he be to stretch a thing out, must get somebody or other to lend a hand; but God stretched out the vast expanse, and

keeps it still upon the stretch himself, by his own power. Let not Israel be discouraged then; nothing is too hard for him to do that made the world, Ps. cxxiv. 8. And, having made all, he can make what use he pleases of all, and has it in his power to serve his own purposes by them.

4. The confusion which this would put upon the oracles of Babylon, by the confutation it would give them, v. 25. God, by delivering his people out of Babylon, would frustrate the tokens of the liars, of all the lying prophets, that said the Babylonian monarchy had many ages yet to live, and pretended to ground their predictions upon some token, some sign or other, which, according to the rules of their art, foreboded its prosperity. How mad will these conjurers grow with vexation, when they see that their skill fails them, and that the contrary happens to that which they so coveted, and were so confident of. Nor would it only baffle their pretended prophets, but their celebrated politicians too; he turns the wise men backward: finding they cannot go on with their projects, they are forced to quit them; and so he makes the judges fools, and makes their knowledge foolish. Those that are made acquainted with Christ, see all the knowledge they had before to be foolishness in comparison with the knowledge of him. And those that are adversaries to him, will find all their counsels, like Ahithophel's, turned into foolishness, and themselves *taken in their own craftiness*, 1 Cor. iii. 19.

5. The confirmation which this would give to the oracles of God, which the Jews had distrusted, and their enemies despised; God *confirms the word of his servant*; (v. 26.) he confirms it by accomplishing it in its season, and performs the counsel of the messengers whom he hath many a time sent to his people, to tell them what great blessings he had in store for them. Note, The exact fulfilling of the prophecies of scripture is a confirmation of the truth of the whole book, and an incontestable evidence of its divine original and authority.

6. The particular favours God designed for his people, that were now in captivity, v. 26.—28. These were foretold long before they went into captivity, that they might see reason to expect a correction, but no reason to fear a final destruction.

(1.) It is here supposed that Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, shall for a time lie in ruins, dispeopled and uninhabited; but it is promised that they shall be rebuilt and repeopled. When Isaiah lived, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, were full of inhabitants; but they will be emptied, burnt, and destroyed; it was then hard to believe that concerning such strong and populous cities. But the justice of God will do that; and when that is done, it will be hard to believe that ever they will recover themselves again, and yet the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do that too. God has said to Jerusalem, *Thou shalt be inhabited*; for, while the world stands, God will have a church in it; and therefore he will raise up those who *shall say to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built*; for, if it be not built, it cannot be inhabited, Ps. lxxix. 35, 36. When God's time is come for the building up of his church, let him alone to find both houses for his people, for they shall not lie exposed, and people for his houses, for they shall not stand empty. The cities of Judah too shall again be built. The Assyrian army under Sennacherib only took them, and then, upon the defeat of that army, they returned undamaged to the right owners; but the Chaldean army *demolished* them, and by carrying away the inhabitants left them to go to decay of themselves; for if lesser judgments prevail not to humble and reform men, God will send greater; yet these desolations shall not be perpetual, God will raise up the wastes and decayed places thereof;

for he will not contend for ever! The city of strangers, when it is ruined, shall never be built; (*ch. xxxv. 2.*) but the city of God's own children is out continued for a time.

(2.) It is here supposed that the temple too should be destroyed, and lie for a time razed to the foundations; but it is promised that the foundation of it shall again be laid, and no doubt built upon. As the desolation of the sanctuary was to all the pious Jews the most mournful part of the destruction, so the restoration and re-establishment of it would be the most joyful part of the deliverance. What joy can they have in the rebuilding of Jerusalem, if the temple there be not rebuilt; for that is it that makes it a holy city, and truly beautiful. This therefore was the chief thing that the Jews had at heart, and had in view, in their return; therefore they would go back to Jerusalem, to *build the house of the Lord God of Israel there*, Ezra i. 3.

(3.) It is here supposed that very great difficulties would lie in the way of this deliverance, which it would be impossible for them to wade through; but it is promised that by a divine power they should all be removed; (v. 27.) *God saith to the deep, Be dry*; so he did when he brought Israel out of Egypt; and so he will again when he brings them out of Babylon, if there be occasion. *Who art thou, O great mountain?* Dost thou stand in the way? Before Zerubbabel, the commander-in-chief of the returning captives, *thou shalt become a plain*, Zech. iv. 7. So, *Who art thou, O great deep?* Dost thou retard their passage, and think to block it up? Thou shalt be dry, and thy rivers that supply thee shall be dried up. When Cyrus took Babylon by draining the river Euphrates into many channels, and so making it passable for his army, this was fulfilled. Note, Whatever obstructions lie in the way of Israel's redemption, God can remove them with a word's speaking.

(4.) It is here supposed that none of the Jews themselves would be able by might and power to force their way out of Babylon; but it is promised that God will raise up a stranger from afar off, that shall fairly open the way for them, and now at length he names the very man, many scores of years before he was born or thought of; (v. 28.) *That saith of Cyrus, he is my shepherd*. Israel is his people, and the sheep of his pasture; these sheep are now in the midst of wolves, in the hands of the thief and robber; they are impounded for trespass. Now Cyrus shall be his shepherd, employed by him to release these sheep, and to take care of their return to their own green pastures again. "In this *he shall perform all my pleasure*, shall bring about what is purposed by me, and will be highly pleasing to me." Note, [1.] The most contingent things are certain to the divine prescience; he knew who was the person, and what was his name, that should be the deliverer of his people, and, when he pleased, he could let his church know it, that, when they heard of such a name beginning to be talked of in the world, they might *lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption drew nigh*. [2.] It is the greatest honour of the greatest men to be employed for God as instruments of his favour to his people. It was more the praise of Cyrus to be God's shepherd, than to be emperor of Persia. [3.] God makes what use he pleases of men, of mighty men, of those that act with the greatest freedom; and, when they think to do as *they please*, he can overrule them, and make them do as *he pleases*. Nay, in those very things wherein they are serving themselves, and look no further than that, God is serving his own purposes by them, and making them to perform all his pleasure. Rich princes shall do what poor prophets have foretold.



## CHAP. XLV.

Cyrus was nominated, in the foregoing chapter, to be God's shepherd: more is said to him, and more of him, in this chapter, not only because he was to be instrumental in the release of the Jews out of their captivity, but because he was to be therein a type of the great Redeemer, and that release was to be typical of the great redemption from sin and death; for that was the salvation of which all the prophets witnessed. We have here, I. The great things which God would do for Cyrus, that he might be put into a capacity to discharge God's people, v. 1.-4. II. The proof God would hereby give of his eternal power and godhead, and his universal, incontestable, sovereignty, v. 5.-7. III. A prayer for the hastening of this deliverance, v. 8. IV. A check to the unbelieving Jews, who quarrelled with God for the lengthening out of their captivity, v. 9, 10. V. Encouragement given to the believing Jews, who trusted in God, and continued instant in prayer, assuring them that God would in due time accomplish this work by the hand of Cyrus, v. 11.-15. VI. A challenge given to the worshippers of idols, and their doom read, and satisfaction given to the worshippers of the true God, and their comfort secured, with an eye to the Mediator, who is made of God to us both Righteousness and Sanctification, v. 16.-25. And here, as in other parts of this prophecy, there is much of Christ, and gospel-grace.

1. **T**HUS saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut: 2. I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: 3. And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I the LORD which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. 4. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

Cyrus was a Mede, descended (as some say) from Astyages king of Media; the pagan writers are not agreed in their accounts of his original; some tell us that in his infancy he was an outcast, left exposed, and was saved from perishing by a herdsman's wife. However, it is agreed, that, being a man of an active genius, he soon made himself very considerable; especially, when Cræsus king of Lydia made a descent upon his country, which he not only repulsed, but revenged, prosecuting the advantages he had gained against Cræsus with such vigour, that in a little time he took Sardis, and made himself master of the rich kingdom of Lydia, and the many provinces that then belonged to it. This made him very great, (for Cræsus was rich to a proverb,) and enabled him to pursue his victories in many countries; but it was near ten years after that, in conjunction with his uncle Darius, and with the forces of Persia, that he made this famous attack upon Babylon, which is here foretold, and which we have the history of, Dan. v. Babylon was now grown exorbitantly rich and strong; it was forty-five miles in compass, some say more; the walls thirty-two feet thick, and a hundred cubits high; some say, they were so thick, that six chariots might drive abreast upon them; some say, they were fifty cubits thick, and two hundred high. Cyrus seems to have had a great ambition to make himself master of this place, and to have projected it long; and at last he performed it.

Now here, 110 years before it came to pass, we are told,

1. What great things God would do for him, that he might put it into his power to release his people; in order to this, he shall be a mighty conqueror, and a wealthy monarch, and nations shall become tributaries to him, and help him both with men and money. Now that which God here promised to do for Cyrus, he could have done for Zerubbabel, or some of the Jews themselves; but the wealth and power of this world God has seldom seen fit to intrust his own people with much of, so many are the snares and temptations that attend it; but if there has been occasion, for the good of the church, to make use of it, God has been pleased rather to put it into the hands of others, to be employed for them, than to venture it in their own hands.

Cyrus is here called God's *anointed*, because he was both designed and qualified for this great service, by the counsel of God, and was to be herein a type of the Messiah. God engages to hold his right hand, not only to strengthen and sustain him, but to direct his motions and intentions, as Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands, when he was to shoot his arrow against Syria, 2 Kings xiii. 16. Being under such direction,

1. He shall extend his conquests very far, and shall make nothing of the opposition that will be given him. Babylon is too strong a place for a young hero to begin with, and, therefore, that he may be able to deal with that, great additions shall be made to his strength by other conquests. (1.) Populous kingdoms shall yield to him; God will subdue nations before him; when he is in the full career of his successes, he shall make nothing of a nation's being born to him at once: yet it is not he that subdues them, it is God that subdues them for him; the battle is his, and therefore his is the victory. (2.) Potent kings shall fall before him; *I will loose the loins of kings*; either the girdle of their loins, divest them of their power and dignity, or the strength of their loins, and then it was literally fulfilled in Belshazzar, for when he was terrified by the handwriting on the wall, *the joints of his loins were loosed*, Dan. v. 6. (3.) Great cities shall surrender themselves into his hands, without giving him or themselves any trouble. God will incline the keepers of the city, *to open before him the two-leaved gates*, not treacherously, or timorously, but from a full conviction that it is to no purpose to contend with him; and therefore the gates shall not be shut to keep him out as an enemy, but thrown open to admit him as a friend. (4.) The longest and most dangerous marches shall be made easy and ready to him; *I will go before thee*, to clear the way, and to conduct thee in it, and then the crooked places shall be made straight; or, as some read it, the hilly places shall be levelled and made even. Those will find a ready road, that have God going before them. (5.) No opposition shall stand before him; he that gives him his commission will break in pieces the gates of brass that are shut against him, and *cut in sunder the bars of iron*, wherewith they are fastened. This was fulfilled in the letter, if that be true which Herodotus reports, that the city of Babylon had a hundred gates all of brass, with posts and hooks of the same metal.

2. He shall replenish his coffers very much; (v. 3.) *I will give thee the treasures of darkness*; treasures of gold and silver, that have been long kept close under lock and key, and had not seen the light of many years; or had been buried under ground by the inhabitants, in their fright, upon the taking of the city. The riches of many nations had been brought to Babylon, and Cyrus seized all together. *The hidden riches of secret places*, which belonged either to the crown or to private persons, shall all

be a prey to Cyrus. Thus God, designing him to do a piece of service to his church, paid him richly for it beforehand; and Cyrus very honestly owned God's goodness to him, and, in consideration of that, released the captives; (Ezra i. 2.) *God has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and thereby has obliged me to build him an house at Jerusalem.*

II. We are here told what God designed, in doing all this for Cyrus. What Cyrus aimed at in undertaking his wars, we may easily guess; but what God aimed at in giving him such wonderful success in his wars, we are here told:

1. It was that the God of Israel might be glorified; "That thou mayest know by all this that I the Lord am the God of Israel; for I have called thee by thy name, long before thou wast born." When Cyrus had this prophecy of Isaiah showed him, and there found his own name, and his own achievements particularly described so long before, he shall thereby be brought to acknowledge that the God of Israel is the Lord Jehovah, the only living and true God, and continues to own his Israel, though now in captivity. It is well when thus men's prosperity brings them to the knowledge of God, for too often it makes them forget him.

2. It was that the Israel of God might be released, v. 4. Cyrus knew not God, as the God of Israel; having been trained up in the worship of idols, the true God was to him an unknown God; but, though he knew not God, God not only knew him when he came into being, but foreknew him, and bespoke him for his shepherd; he called him by his name, *Cyrus*, nay, which was yet a greater honour, he surnamed him, and called him his *anointed*. And why did God do all this for Cyrus? Not for his own sake, be it known to him; whether he was a man of virtue or no, is questioned. Xenophon indeed, when he would describe the heroic virtues of an excellent prince, made use of Cyrus's name, and many of the particulars of his story, in his *Cyropædia*; but other historians represent him as haughty, cruel, and bloodthirsty. The reason why God preferred him, was, for Jacob his servant's sake. Note, (1.) In all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, the sudden falls of the great and strong, and the surprising advancements of the weak and obscure, God is designing the good of his church. (2.) It is therefore the wisdom of those to whom God has given wealth and power, to use it for his glory, by being kind with it to his people. Cyrus is preferred, that Israel may be released; he shall have a kingdom, only that God's people may have their liberty; for their kingdom is not of this world, it is yet to come. In all this, Cyrus was a type of Christ, who was made victorious over principalities and powers, and intrusted with unsearchable riches, for the use and benefit of God's servants, his elect. When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, took those captives that had taken others captives, and *opened the prison to those that were bound.*

5. *I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God besides me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me;* 6. That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that *there is none besides me: I am the LORD, and there is none else.* 7. *I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.* 8. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let right-

eousness spring up together. *I the LORD have created it.* 9. *Wo unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands!* 10. *Wo unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth!*

God here asserts his sole and sovereign dominion, as that which he designed to prove and manifest to the world, in all the great things he did *for* Cyrus, and *by* him. Observe,

1. How this doctrine is here laid down, concerning the sovereignty of the great Jehovah, in two things;

1. That he is God alone, and there is no God beside him; this is here inculcated as a fundamental truth, which, if it were firmly believed, would abolish idolatry out of the world. With what an awful, commanding air of majesty and authority, bidding defiance, as it were, to all pretenders, does the great God here proclaim it to the world; *I am the Lord, I the Lord Jehovah, and there is none else, there is no God beside me*, no self-existent, self-sufficient Being, none infinite and eternal. And again, (v. 6.) *There is none beside me*; all that are set up in competition with me are counterfeits, they are all vanity, and a lie, for *I am the Lord, and there is none else*. This is here said to Cyrus, not only to cure him of the sin of his ancestors, which was, worshipping idols, but to prevent his falling into the sin of some of his predecessors in victory and universal monarchy, which was, setting up themselves for gods, and being idolized; to which some attribute much of the origin of idolatry. Let Cyrus, when he is become thus rich and great, remember that still he is but a man, and there is no God but one.

2. That he is Lord of all, and there is nothing done without him; (v. 7.) *I form the light*, which is grateful and pleasing, and *I create darkness*, which is grievous and unpleasing, *I make peace*, put here for all good, and *I create evil*, not the evil of sin, God is not the Author of that, but the evil of punishment. *I the Lord* order and direct, and *do all these things*. Observe, (1.) The very different events that befall the children of men; light and darkness, opposite to each other, and yet, in the course of providence, sometimes intermixed, like the morning and evening twilights, *neither day nor night*; (Zech. xiv. 6.) a mixture of joys and sorrows in the same cup, allays to each other; sometimes they are counterchanged, as noonday light and midnight darkness; in the revelation of every day each takes its turn, and there are short transitions from the one to the other; witness Job's case. (2.) The self-same cause of both, and that is he that is the first Cause of all; I the Lord, the Fountain of all being, am the Fountain of all power. He who formed the natural light, (Gen. i. 3.) still forms the providential light; he who at first made peace among the jarring seeds and principles of nature, makes peace in the affairs of men; he who allowed the natural darkness, which was a mere privation, creates the providential darkness, for concerning troubles and afflictions he gives positive orders. Note, The wise God has the ordering and disposing of all our comforts and all our crosses in this world.

II. How this doctrine is here proved and published:

1. It is proved by that which God did for Cyrus; "*There is no God beside me*, for (v. 5.) *I girded thee, though thou hast not known me*. It was not

thine own idol, which thou didst know and worship, that girded thee for this expedition, that gave thee authority and ability for it. No, it was I that girded thee, I whom thou didst not know, nor seek to." By this it appears that the God of Israel is the only true God, that he manages and makes what use he pleases, even of those that are strangers to him, and pay their homage to other gods.

2. It is published to all the world by the word of God, by his providence, and by the testimony of the suffering Jews in Babylon, that all may know from the east and from the west, sunrise and sunset, that the Lord is God, and there is none else. The wonderful deliverance of the Israel of God proclaimed to all the world that *there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, that rides on the heavens for their help.*

III. How this doctrine is here improved and applied:

1. For the comfort of those that earnestly longed, and yet quietly waited, for the redemption of Israel; (*v. 8.*) *Drop down, ye heavens, from above.* Some take this as the saints' prayer for the deliverance; I rather take it as God's precept concerning it, for he is said to *command deliverances*, Ps. xlv. 4. Now the precept is directed to heaven and earth, and all the hosts of both, as royal precepts commonly run, *To all officers, civil and military.* All the creatures shall be made in their places to contribute to the carrying on of this great work, when God will have it done. If men will not be aiding and assisting, God will produce it without them, as he does the dews of heaven, and the grass of the earth, which *tarry not for man, nor wait for the sons of men*, Mic. v. 7. Observe, (1.) The method of this great deliverance that is to be wrought for Israel; righteousness must first be wrought in them, they must be brought to repent of their sins, to renounce their idoltries, to return to God, and reform their lives, and then the salvation shall be wrought for them, and not till then. We must not expect salvation without righteousness, they spring up together, and together the Lord hath created them; what he has joined together, let not us therefore put asunder. See Ps. lxxxv. 9.—11. Christ died to save us *from our sins, not in our sins*, and is made Redemption to us, by being made to us Righteousness and Sanctification. (2.) The means of this great deliverance; rather than it shall fail, when the set time for it is come, *the heavens shall drop down righteousness, and the earth shall open to bring forth salvation*, and both concur to the reformation, and so to the restoration of God's Israel. It is from heaven, from above the skies, that righteousness drops down, for every grace and good gift is from above; nay, since the more plentiful effusion of the Spirit, it is now poured down, and if our hearts be open to receive it, the product will be the fruits of righteousness, and the great salvation.

2. For reproof to those of the church's enemies that opposed this salvation, or those of her friends, that despaired of it; (*v. 9.*) *Wo unto him that strives with his Maker!* God is the Maker of all things, and therefore *our* Maker, which is a reason why we should always submit to him, and never contend with him. (1.) Let not the proud oppressors, in the elevation of their spirits, oppose God's designs concerning the deliverance of his people, nor think to detain them any longer, when the time is come for their release. Wo to the insulting Babylonians that set God at defiance, as Pharaoh did, and will not let his people go! (2.) Let not the poor oppressed, in the dejection of their spirits, murmur and quarrel with God for the prolonging of their captivity, as if he dealt unjustly or unkindly with them, or think to force their way before God's time is come. Note, Those will find themselves in a

woful condition, that strive with their Maker; for none ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered. Sinful man is indeed a quarrelsome creature; but *let the potters strive with the potters of the earth*; men are but earthen pots, nay, they are broken potters, and are made so very much by their mutual contentions; they are dashed in pieces one against another; and if they are disposed to strive, let them strive with one another, let them meddle with their match; but let them not dare to contend with him that is infinitely above them, which is as senseless and absurd as, [1.] *For the clay to find fault with the potter; Shall the clay say to him that forms it, "What makest thou? Why dost thou make me of this shape, and not that?"* Nay, it is as if the clay should be in such heat and passion with the potter as to tell him that he has no hands, or that he works as awkwardly as if he had none. Shall the clay pretend to be wiser than the potter, and therefore to advise him; or mightier than the potter, and therefore to control him? He that gave us being, that gave us this being, may design concerning us, and dispose of us, as he pleases; and it is impudent presumption for us to prescribe to him. Shall we impeach God's wisdom, or question his power, who are ourselves so curiously, so wonderfully, made? Shall we say, He has no hands whose hands made us, and in whose hands we are? The doctrine of God's sovereignty has enough in it to silence all our discontents and objections against the methods of his providence and grace, Rom. ix. 20, 21. [2.] It is as unnatural as for the child to find fault with the parents; to say to the father, *What begettest thou?* Or to the mother, *"What hast thou brought forth? Why was I not begotten and born an angel, exempt from the infirmities of human nature, and the calamities of human life?"* Must not those who are children of men expect to share in the common lot, and to fare as others fare? If God is our Father, where is the honour we owe to him by submitting to his will?

11. Thus saith the LORD the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons; and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. 12. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, *even* my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts have I commanded. 13. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts. 14. Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia, and of the Sabaeans men of stature, shall come over unto thee and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, *saying*, Surely God is in thee, and *there is* none else; *there is* no God. 15. Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour. 16. They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together *that are* makers of idols. 17. But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting sa'

vation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. 18. For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth and made it, he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited; I am the LORD, and there is none else. 19. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain. I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

The people of God in captivity, who reconciled themselves to the will of God in their affliction, and were content to wait his time for their deliverance, are here assured that they should not wait in vain.

I. They are invited to inquire concerning the issue of their troubles, *v. 11. The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker*, though he does not allow them to strive with him, yet encourages them, 1. To consult his word; "*Ask of me things to come*; have recourse to the prophets and their prophecies, and see what they say concerning these things. Ask the watchmen, What of the night? Ask them, How long? Things to come, as far as they are revealed, belong to us and to our children, and we must not be strangers to them. 2. To seek unto him by prayer; "*Concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands*, which, as becomes them, submit to the will of their Father, the will of their Potter, command ye me; not by way of prescription, but by way of petition. Be earnest in your requests, and confident in your expectations, as far as both are guided by, and grounded upon, the promise." We may not strive with our Maker by passionate complaints, but we may wrestle with him by faithful and fervent prayer. *My sons, and the work of my hands*, commend ye to me; so some read it; bring them to me, and leave them with me. See the power of prayer, and its prevalency with God; *Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am; what wouldst thou that I should do unto you?* Some read it with an interrogation, as carrying on the reproof, (*v. 9, 10.*) *Do ye question me concerning things to come?* And am I bound to give you an account? *And concerning my children, even concerning the work of my hands, will you command me, or prescribe to me?* Dare you do so? *Shall any teach God knowledge, or give law to him?* Those that complain of God, do in effect assume an authority over him.

II. They are encouraged to depend upon the power of God, when they were brought very low, and were utterly incapable of helping themselves, *v. 12. Their help stands in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth*; which he mentions here, not only for his own glory, but for their comfort. The heavens and earth shall contribute, if he pleases, to the deliverance of the church; (*v. 8.*) for he created both, and therefore has both at command. 1. He made the earth, and created man upon it, for it was intended to be a habitation for man, *Ps. cxv. 16.* He has therefore not only authority, but wisdom, and power, sufficient to govern man here on this earth, and to make what use he pleases of him. 2. *His hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts he commanded into being at first*, and therefore still governs all their motions and influences. It is good news to God's Israel, that their God is the Creator and Governor of the world.

III. They are particularly told what God would do for them, that they might know what to depend

upon; and this shall lead them to expect a more glorious Redeemer, and redemption, of whom, and of which, Cyrus, and their deliverance by him, were types and figures.

1. Liberty shall be proclaimed to them, *v. 13. Cyrus is the man that shall do it*; and, in order hereunto, God will put power into his hands; *I have raised him up in righteousness*, in pursuance and performance of my promises, and to plead my people's just but injured cause. He will give him success in all his enterprises, particularly that against Babylon; *I will direct all his ways*, and then it follows, *I will prosper him*; for these must needs speed well that are under a divine direction; and God will make plain the way of those whom he designs to employ for him. Two things Cyrus must do for God: (1.) Jerusalem is God's city, but it is now in ruins, and he must rebuild it, he must give orders for the rebuilding of it, and give wherewithal to do it. (2.) Israel is God's people, but they are now captives, and he must release them freely and generously; not demanding any ransom, or compounding with them for price or reward. And Christ is appointed to do that for poor captive souls, which Cyrus was to do for the captive Jews, to proclaim *the opening of the prison to them that were bound*, (*ch. lxi. 1.*) enlargement from a worse bondage than that in Babylon.

2. Provision shall be made for them. They went out poor, and unable to bear the expenses of their return and re-establishment; and therefore it is promised that the labour of Egypt and other nations should *come over to them, and be theirs, v. 14.* Cyrus, having conquered those countries, out of their spoils provided for the returning Jews; and he ordered his subjects to furnish them with necessaries, (*Ezra. i. 4.*) so that they did not go out empty from Babylon any more than from Egypt. Those that are redeemed by Christ, shall be not only provided for, but enriched. Those whose spirits God stirs up to go to the heavenly Zion, may depend upon him to bear their charges. The world is theirs as far as is good for them.

3. Proselytes shall be brought over to them; *Men of stature shall come after thee in chains; they shall fall down to thee, saying, Surely God is in thee.* This was in part fulfilled when many of the people of the land became Jews, (*Esther viii. 17.*) and said, *We will go with you, humbly begging leave to do so, for we have heard that God is with you*, *Zech. viii. 23.* The restoration would be a means of the conviction of many, and the conversion of some. Perhaps many of the Chaldeans who were now themselves conquered by Cyrus, when they saw the Jews going back in triumph, came, and begged pardon for the affronts and abuses they had given them, owned that God was among them, and that he was God alone, and therefore desired to join themselves to them. But this promise was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel-church, when the Gentiles should become obedient by word and deed to the faith of Christ, (*Rom. xv. 18.*) as willing captives to the church, (*Ps. cx. 3.*) glad to wear her chains; when an infidel, beholding the public worship of Christians, shall own himself convinced that *God is with them of a truth*, (*1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.*) and shall assay to join himself to them; and when those that had been of the *synagogue of Satan, shall come, and worship before the church's feet*, and be made to know that *God has loved her*, (*Rev. iii. 9.*) and the *kings of the earth and the nations shall bring their glory into the gospel-Jerusalem*, *Rev. xxi. 24.* Note, it is good to be with those, though it be in chains, that have God with them.

IV. They are taught to trust God further than they can see him. The prophet puts this word into

their mouths, and goes before them in saying it; (v. 15.) *Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself.* 1. God hid himself when he brought them into the trouble; *hid himself and was wroth, ch. lvii.* 17. Note, Though God be his people's God and Saviour, yet sometimes, when they provoke him, he hides himself from them in displeasure, suspends his favours, and lays them under his frowns: but let them wait upon the Lord that hides his face, *ch. viii.* 17. 2. He hid himself when he was bringing them out of the trouble. Note, When God is acting as Israel's God and Saviour, *commonly his way is in the sea, Ps. lxxvii.* 19. The salvation of the church is carried on in a mysterious way, by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts working on men's spirits, (*Zech. iv. 6.*) by weak and unlikely instruments, small and accidental occurrences, and not wrought till the last extremity: but this is our comfort, though God hide himself, we are sure he is *the God of Israel, the Saviour, Job xxxv.* 14.

V. They are instructed to triumph over idolaters and all the worshippers of other gods; (v. 16.) *They who are makers of idols, not only who frame them, but who make gods of them by praying to them, they shall be ashamed and confounded,* when they shall be convinced of their mistakes, and shall be forced to acknowledge that the God of Israel is the only true God, and when they shall be disappointed in their expectations from their idols, under whose protection they had put themselves. They shall go to confusion, when they shall find that they can neither excuse the sin, nor escape the punishment of it, *Ps. xcvi.* 7. It is not here and there one more timorous than the rest that shall thus shrink, and give up the cause, but all of them; nay, though they appear in a body, though hand join in hand, and they do all they can to keep one another in countenance, yet they shall go to confusion together: bind them in bundles, to burn them.

VI. They are assured that those who trust in God, shall never be made ashamed of their confidence in him, *v. 17.* Now that God was about to deliver them out of Babylon, he directed them by his prophet, 1. To look up to him as the Author of their salvation; *Israel shall be saved in the Lord.* Not only their salvation shall be wrought out by his power, but it shall be treasured up for them in his grace and promise, and so secured to them: they shall be saved in him, for his name shall be their strong tower, into which they shall run, and in which they shall be safe. 2. To look beyond this temporal deliverance, to that which is spiritual, and has reference to another world; to think of that salvation by the Messiah, which is an everlasting salvation, the salvation of the soul, a rescue from everlasting misery, and a restoration to everlasting bliss; "Give diligence to make that sure, for it may be made sure, so sure, that *ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.* Ye shall not only be delivered from the everlasting shame and contempt which will be the portion of idolaters, (*Dan. xii. 2.*) but ye shall have everlasting honour and glory." There is a world without end; and it will be well or ill with us according as it will be with us in that world. They who are saved with the everlasting salvation, shall never be ashamed of what they did, or suffered, in the hopes of it; for it will so far outdo their expectations, as to be a more abundant reimbursement. The returning captives owned that to them did *belong confusion of face,* (*Dan. ix. 7, 8.*) yet God tells them that they shall not be confounded, but shall have assurance for ever. They who are confounded as penitents for their own sin, shall not be confounded as believers in God's promise and power.

VII. They are engaged for ever to cleave to God, and never to desert him, never to distrust him. What

had been often inculcated before, is here again repeated, for the encouragement of his people to continue faithful to him, and to hope that he would be so to them; *I am the Lord, and there is none else.* That the Lord we serve and trust in is God alone, appears by the two great lights; that of nature, and that of revelation.

1. It appears by the light of nature; for he made the world, and therefore may justly demand its homage; (v. 18.) "*Thus saith the Lord, that created the heavens, and formed the earth, I am the Lord; the sovereign Lord of all, and there is none else.*" The gods of the heathen did not do this, nay, they did not pretend to do it. He here mentions the creation of the heavens, but enlarges more upon that of the earth, because that is the part of the creation which we have the nearest view of, and are most conversant with. It is here observed, (1.) That he formed it: it is not a rude and indigested chaos, but cast into the most proper shape and size by infinite wisdom. (2.) That he fixed it. When he had made it, he established it, *founded it on the seas, (Ps. xxiv. 2.) hung it on nothing, (Job. xxvi. 7.)* as at first he made it of nothing, and yet made it substantial, and hung it fast; *Ponderibus librata suis—Poised by its weight.* (3.) That he fitted it for use, and for the service of man, to whom he designed to give it. He created it not in vain, merely to be a proof of his power; but he formed it to be inhabited by the children of men, and for that end he drew the waters off it with which it was at first covered, and made the *dry land appear, Ps. civ. 6, 7.* Be it observed here, to the honour of God's wisdom, that he made nothing in vain; but intended every thing for some end, and fitted it to answer the intention. If any man prove to have been made in vain, it is his own fault. It should also be observed, to the honour of God's goodness and his favour to man, that he reckened that not made in vain, which serves for his use and benefit, to be a habitation and maintenance for him.

2. It appears by the light of revelation: as the works of God abundantly prove that he is God alone, so does his word, and the discovery he has made of himself and of his mind and will by it. His oracles far exceed those of the Pagan deities, as well as his operations, *v. 19.* The preference is here placed in three things. All that God has said, is plain, satisfactory, and just. (1.) In the manner of the delivery of it, it is plain and open; *I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth.* The Pagan deities delivered their oracles out of dens and caverns, with a low and hollow voice, and in ambiguous expressions; those that had familiar spirits, whispered and muttered; (*ch. viii.* 19.) but God delivered his law from the top of mount Sinai, before all the thousands of Israel, in distinct, audible, and intelligible sounds; *Wisdom cries in the chief places of concourse, Prov. i. 20, 21. viii. 1—3.* The vision is written, and made plain, so that he who runs may read it; if it be obscure to any, they may thank themselves. Christ pleaded in his own defence what God says here; *In secret have I said nothing, John xviii. 20.* (2.) In the use and benefit of it, it was highly satisfactory; *I said not unto the seed of Jacob, who consulted these oracles and governed themselves by them, Seek ye me in vain,* as the false gods did to their worshippers, who sought for the living to the dead, *ch. viii. 19.* This includes all the gracious answers that God gave to those who consulted him, his word is to them a faithful guide; and to those that prayed to him, the seed of Jacob are a praying people, it is the *generation of them that seek him, Ps. xxiv. 6.* And as he has in his word invited them to seek him, so he never denied their believing prayers, nor disappointed their believing expectations. He said not

to them, to any of them, *Seek ye me in vain*; for if he did not think fit to give them the particular thing they prayed for, yet he gave them grace sufficient, and the comfort and satisfaction of soul which were equivalent. What we say of winter, is true of prayer, It never rots in the skies. God not only gives a gracious answer to, but will be the bountiful Rewarder of, those that diligently seek him. (3.) In the matter of it, it was incontestably just, and there was no iniquity in it; *I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right*, and consonant to the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil. The heathen deities dictated those things to their worshippers, which were the reproach of human nature, and tended to the extirpation of virtue: but God speaks righteousness, dictates that which is right in itself, and tends to make men righteous; and therefore he is God, and there is none else.

20. Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye *that are* escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god *that* cannot save. 21. Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? *who* hath told it from that time? *have* not I the Lord? and *there is* no God else besides me; a just God, and a Saviour: *there is* none besides me. 22. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for *I am* God, and *there is* none else. 23. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. 24. Surely, shall *one* say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength: *even* to him shall *men* come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. 25. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory

What is here said is intended, as before,

I. For the conviction of idolaters, to show them their folly in worshipping gods that cannot help them, and neglecting a God that can. Let all *that are escaped of the nations*, not only the people of the Jews, but those of other nations that were by Cyrus released out of captivity in Babylon, let them come, and hear what is to be said against their worshipping idols, that they may be cured of it as well as the Jews; that Babylon, which had of old been the womb of idolatry, might now become the grave of it. Let the refugees assemble themselves, and come together: God has something to say to them for their own good, and it is this, that idolatry is a foolish sottish thing, upon two accounts:

1. It is setting up a refuge of lies for themselves. They *set up the wood of their graven image*, for that is the *substratum*; though they overlay it with gold, deck it with ornaments, and make a god of it, yet still it is but wood. They *pray to a god that cannot save*; for he cannot hear, he cannot help, he can do nothing; how do they disparage themselves, who give honour to that as a god, which cannot, as a god, give good to them! How do they deceive themselves, who pray for relief to that which is in no capacity at all to relieve them! Certainly they have no knowledge, or are brutish in their knowledge, who take so much pains, and do so much

penance, in seeking the favour of a god that has no power.

2. It is setting up a rival with God, the only living and true God; (v. 21.) "Summon them all, tell them that the great cause shall again be tried, though once adjudged, between God and Baal, *bring them near, and let them take counsel together*, what to say in defence of themselves and their idols: it shall, as before, be put upon this issue; let them show when any of their gods did with any certainty foretell future events, as the God of Israel has done, and it shall be acknowledged that they have some colour for their pretensions. But none of them ever did; their prophets were lying prophets; but *I the Lord have told it from that time*, long before it came to pass; therefore you must: *where there is no God else beside me.*" (1.) None besides is fit to rule; he is a just God, and rules in justice, and will execute justice for those that are oppressed. (2.) None besides is able to help; as he is a just God, so is he the Saviour, who can save without the assistance of any, but without whom none can save. Those therefore have no sense of truth and falsehood, good and evil, no, nor of their own interest, that set up any in competition with him.

II. For the comfort and encouragement of all God's faithful worshippers, whoever they are, v. 22. They that worship idols pray to gods that cannot save; but the God of Israel says it to all the ends of the earth, to his people, though they are scattered into the utmost corners of the world, and seem to be lost and forgotten in their dispersion; "Let them but look to me by faith and prayer, look above instruments and second causes, look off from all pretenders, and look up to me, and they shall be saved." It seems to refer further, to the conversion of the Gentiles that live in the ends of the earth; the most distant nations, when the standard of the gospel is set up; *to it shall the Gentiles seek*. When Christ is lifted up from the earth, as the brazen serpent upon the pole, he shall draw the eyes of all men to him; they shall all be invited to look unto him, as the stung Israelites did to the brazen serpent: and so strong is the eye of faith, that by divine grace it will reach the Saviour, and fetch in salvation by him even from the ends of the earth; *for he is God, and there is none else*.

Two things are here promised, for the abundant satisfaction of all that by faith look to the Saviour.

1. That the glory of the God they serve shall be greatly advanced; and this will be good news to all the Lord's people, that, how much soever they and their names are depressed, God will be exalted, v. 23. This is confirmed by an oath, that we might have strong consolation; *I have sworn by myself*, (and God can swear by no greater, Heb. vi. 13.) *the word is gone out of my mouth*, and shall neither be recalled nor return empty; it is gone forth in righteousness; for it is the most reasonable, equitable thing in the world, that he who made all should be Lord of all; that, since all beings are derived from him, they should all be devoted to him. He has said it, and it shall be made good, *I will be exalted*, Ps. xlii. 10. He has assured us, (1.) That he will be universally submitted to, that the kingdoms of the world shall become his kingdom, they shall do him homage; *Unto me every knee shall bow*; and they shall bind themselves by an oath of allegiance to him; *Unto me every tongue shall swear*. (This is applied to the dominion of our Lord Jesus; (Rom. xiv. 10, 11.) *We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ*, and give account to him; for it is written, *As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God*; and it seems to be referred to, Ps. ii. 9, 10. If the heart be brought into obedience to Christ, and made willing in the day of his power, the knee will bow



to him in humble adorations and addresses, in a cheerful obedience to his commands, submission to his disposals, and compliance with his will in both; and the tongue will swear to him, will lay a bond upon the soul to engage it for ever to him; for he that bears an honest mind, never startles at strong engagements. (2.) That he will be universally sought unto, and application shall be made to him from all parts of the world; *Unto him shall men of distant countries come*, to implore his favour; *unto thee shall all flesh come*, with their requests, Ps. lxxv. 2. And when Christ was lifted up from the earth, he drew all men to him. (3.) That it shall be to no purpose to make opposition to him; all that are incensed against him, that rage at his bonds and cords, the nations that are angry because he has taken to himself his great power, and has reigned, that have been incensed at the strictness of his laws, the success of his gospel, and the spiritual nature of his kingdom, they shall be ashamed; some shall be brought to a penitential shame for it, others to a remediless ruin. One way or other, sooner or later, all that are uneasy at Christ's government and victories, will be made ashamed of their folly and obstinacy. Blessed be God for the assurance here given us, that, whatever becomes of us and our interests, *the Lord will reign for ever!*

2. That the welfare of the souls they are concerned for, shall be effectually secured; *Surely shall one say*, and another shall learn by his example to say the same, so that all the seed of Israel, according to the Spirit, shall say, and stand to it; (1.) That God has a sufficiency for them, and that in Christ there is enough to supply all their needs; *In the Lord is all righteousness and strength*; so the margin reads it; he is himself righteous and strong, he can do every thing, and yet will do nothing but what is unquestionably just and equitable: he has also wherewithal to supply the needs of those that seek to him, and depend upon him, upon the equity of his providence and the treasures of his grace; nay, we may say, not only "*He has it*," but "*In him, we have it*," because he has said that he will be to us a God. In the Lord the captive Jews had righteousness; grace both to sanctify their afflictions to them and to qualify them for deliverance, and strength for their support and escape. In the Lord Jesus we have righteousness to recommend us to the good will of God towards us, and strength to begin and carry on the good work of God in us; he is the Fountain of both, and on him we must depend for both, *must go forth in his strength, and make mention of his righteousness*, Ps. lxxi. 16. (2.) That they shall have an abundant bliss and satisfaction in this; [1.] The people of the Jews shall in the Lord be justified before men, and openly glory in their God. The oppressors reproached them, loaded them with calumny, and boasted even of a right to oppress them, as abandoned of their God; but when God shall work out their deliverance, that shall be their justification from these hard censures, and therefore they shall glory in it. [2.] All true Christians, that depend upon Christ for strength and righteousness, in him shall be justified, and shall glory in that. Observe, *First*, All believers are the seed of Israel, an upright, praying seed. *Secondly*, The great privilege they enjoy by Jesus Christ, is, that in him, and for his sake, they are justified before God, Christ being made of God to them Righteousness. All that are justified, will own it is in Christ that they are justified, nor could they be justified by any other; and those who are justified shall be glorified. And therefore, *Thirdly*, The great duty believers owe to Christ, is, to glory in him, and to make their boast of him; *therefore* he is made all in all to us, that *whoso glories, may glory in the Lord*; and let us comply with this intention.

## CHAP. XLVI.

God, by the prophet here, designing shortly to deliver them out of their captivity, prepares them for that deliverance, by possessing them with a detestation of idols, and with a believing confidence in God, even their own God. 1. Let them not be afraid of the idols of Babylon, as if they could any way obstruct their deliverance, for they should be defaced; (v. 1, 2.) but let them trust in that God who had often delivered them, to do it still, to do it now, v. 3, 4. 11. Let them not think to make idols of their own, images of the God of Israel, by them to worship him, as the Babylonians worship their gods, v. 5-7. Let them not be sottish, (v. 8.) but have an eye to God in his word, not in an image; let them depend upon that, and upon the promises and predictions of it, and God's power to accomplish them all, v. 9. 11. And let them know that the unbelief of man shall not make the word of God of no effect, v. 12, 13.

1. **B**EL boweth down, Nebo stoopeth; their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages *were* heavy loaden: *they are* a burden to the weary *beast*. 2. They stoop; they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity. 3. Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne *by me* from the belly, which are carried from the womb: 4. And *even to your old age I am* he; and *even to hoar hairs will I carry you*: I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry, and will deliver *you*.

We are here told,

I. That the false gods will certainly fail their worshippers, then when they have most need of them, v. 1, 2. Bel and Nebo were two celebrated idols of Babylon; some make Bel to be a contraction of Baal, others rather think not, but that it was Belus, one of their first kings, who, after his death, was deified. As Bel was a deified prince, so (some think) Nebo was a deified prophet, for so Nebo signifies; so that Bel and Nebo were their Jupiter and their Mercury, or Apollo. Barnabas and Paul passed at Lystra for Jupiter and Mercury. The names of these idols were taken into the names of their princes; Bel into Belshazzar's, Nebo into Nebuchadnezzar's and Nebuzaradan's, &c. These gods they had long worshipped, and in their revels praised them for their successes, (as appears, Dan. v. 4.) and they insulted over Israel, as if Bel and Nebo were too hard for Jehovah, and should detain them in captivity in defiance of their God. Now that this might be no discouragement to the poor captives, God here tells them what shall become of these idols, which they threaten them with. When Cyrus takes Babylon, down go the idols. It was usual then with conquerors to destroy the gods of the places and people they conquered, and to put the gods of their own nation in the room of them, *ch. xxxvii. 19*. Cyrus will do so; and then Bel and Nebo, that were set up on high, and looked great, bold, and erect, stoop and bow down at the feet of the soldiers that plunder their temples. And because there is a great deal of gold and silver upon them, which was intended to adorn them, but serves to expose them, they carry them away with the rest of the spoil; the carriers' horses, or mules, are laden with them, and their other idols, to be sent, among other lumber, (for so it seems they accounted them rather than treasure,) into Persia. So far are they from being able to support their worshippers, that they are themselves a heavy load in the waggons, and a burthen to the weary beast. The idols can-

not help one another; (v. 2.) *They stoop, they bow down, together*, they are all alike, tottering things, and their day is come to fall; their worshippers cannot help them; they could not deliver the burthen out of the enemies' hand, but themselves (both the idols and the idolaters) are gone into captivity. Let not therefore God's people be afraid of either. When God's ark was taken prisoner by the Philistines, it proved a burthen, not to the beasts, but to the conquerors, who were forced to return it; but when Bel and Nebo are gone into captivity, their worshippers may even give their good word with them, they will never recover themselves.

II. That the true God will never fail his worshippers; "You hear what is become of Bel and Nebo, now *harken to me, O house of Jacob*, (v. 3, 4.) Am I such a god as these? No; though you are brought low, and the house of Israel is but a remnant, your God has been, is, and ever will be, your powerful and faithful Protector."

1. Let God's Israel do him the justice to own that he has hitherto been kind to them, careful of them, tender over them, and has all along done well for them. Let them own, (1.) That he bare them at first; *I have made*. Out of what womb came they, but that of his mercy, and grace, and promise? He formed them into a people, and gave them their constitution. Every good man is what God makes him. (2.) That he bare them up all along; *You have been borne by me from the belly, and carried from the womb*. God began betimes to do them good, as soon as ever they were formed into a nation, nay, when as yet they were very few, and strangers. God took them under a special protection, and *suffered no man to do them wrong*, Ps. cv. 12.—14. In the infancy of their state, when they were not only foolish and helpless, as children, but froward and peevish, God carried them in the arms of his power and love, bare them *as upon eagles' wings*, Exod. xix. 4. Deut. xxxii. 11. Moses had not patience to *carry them, as the nursing father does the sucking child*; (Numb. xi. 12.) but God bare them, and *bare their manners*, Acts xiii. 18. And as God began early to do them good, (when *Israel was a child, then I loved him*), so he had constantly continued to do them good; he had carried them from the womb to this day. And we may all witness for God that he has been thus gracious to us; we have been borne by him from the belly, from the womb, else we had died from the womb, and given up the ghost when we came out of the belly; we have been the constant care of his kind providence, carried in the arms of his power, and in the bosom of his love and pity. The new man is so; all that in us that is born of God, is borne up by him, else it would soon fail. Our spiritual life is sustained by his grace as necessarily and constantly as our natural life by his providence. The saints have acknowledged that God has carried them from the womb, and have encouraged themselves with the consideration of it, in their greatest straits, Ps. xxii. 9, 10.—lxxi. 5, 6, 17.

2. He will then do them the kindness to promise that he will never leave them; he that was their First, will be their Last, that was the Author, will be the Finisher, of their well-being; (v. 4.) "You have been *borne by me from the belly*, nursed when you were children; and *even to your old age, I am he*, when, by reason of your decays and infirmities, you will need help as much as in your infancy." Israel were now growing old, so was their covenant by which they were incorporated, Heb. viii. 13. *Gray hairs were here and there upon them*, Hos. vii. 9. And they had hastened their old age, and the calamities of it, by their irregularities; but God will not cast them off now, will not fail them when

their strength fails; he is still their God, will still carry them in the same everlasting arms that were laid under them in Moses's time, Deut. xxxiii. 27. He has made them, and owns his interest in them, and therefore he will bear, will bear with their infirmities, and bear them up under their afflictions; "Even I will carry and will deliver them; I will now bear them upon eagles' wings out of Babylon, as in their infancy I bare them out of Egypt." This promise to aged Israel is applicable to every aged Israelite. God has graciously engaged to support and comfort his faithful servants, even in their old age. "Even to your old age, when you grow unfit for business, when you are compassed with infirmities, and perhaps your relations begin to grow weary of you; yet *I am he*; he that I am; he that I have been; the very same by whom you have been borne from the belly, and carried from the womb. You change, but I am the same. I am he that I have promised to be; he that you have found me; he that you would have me to be. *I will carry you, I will bear*, will bear you up, and bear you out, and will carry you on in your way, and carry you home at last."

5. To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? 6. They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith, and he maketh it a god: they fall down; yea, they worship. 7. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble. 8. Remember this, and show yourselves men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. 9. Remember the former things of old: for *I am God*, and *there is none else*; *I am God*, and *there is none like me*; 10. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: 11. Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it. 12. Harken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness: 13. I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.

The deliverance of Israel by the destruction of Babylon, (the general subject of all these chapters,) is here insisted upon, and again promised, for the conviction both of idolaters who set up rivals with God, and of oppressors who were enemies to the people of God.

I. For the conviction of those who made and worshipped idols, especially those of Israel who did so, who would have images of their God, as the Babylonians had of theirs.

1. He challenges them either to frame an image that should be thought a resemblance of him, or to set up any being that should stand in competition with him; (v. 5.) *To whom will ye liken me?* It is

absurd to think of representing an infinite and eternal Spirit by the figure of any creature whatsoever; it is to change his truth into a lie, and to turn his glory into shame. None ever saw any similitude of him, nor can see his face, and live. *To whom then can we liken God?* ch. xl. 18, 25. It is likewise absurd to think of making any creature equal with the Creator, who is infinitely above the noblest creatures, yea, or to make any comparison between the creature and the Creator, since, between infinite and finite there is no proportion.

2. He exposes the folly of those who made idols, and then prayed to them, v. 6, 7. (1.) They were at great charge upon their idols, and spared no cost to fit them for their purpose; *They lavish gold out of the bag*; no little will serve, and they do not care how much goes, though they pinch their families and weaken their estates by it. How does the profuseness of idolaters shame the niggardliness of many who call themselves God's servants, but are for a religion that will cost them nothing! Some *lavish gold out of the bag*, to make an idol of it in the house, while others *hoard up gold in the bag*, to make an idol of it in the heart; for *covetousness is idolatry*, as dangerous, though not as scandalous, as the other. *They weigh silver in the balance*, either to be the matter of their idol, (for even they that were most sottish had so much sense as to think that God should be served with the best they had, the best they could possibly afford; they that represented him by a calf, made it a golden one,) or, to pay the workman's wages. The service of sin often proves very expensive. (2.) They were in great care about their idols, and took no little pains about them; (v. 7.) *They bear him upon their own shoulders*, and do not hire porters to do it; they *carry him*, and *set him in his place*, more like a dead corpse than a living god; they set him on a pedestal, and he stands; they take a great deal of pains to fasten him, and *from his place he shall not remove*, that they may know where to find him, though at the same time they know he can neither move a hand, nor stir a step, to do them any kindness. (3.) After all, they paid great respect to their idols, though they were but the works of their own hands, and the creatures of their own fancies: when the goldsmith has made it that which they please to call a god, *they fall down, yea, they worship it*. If they magnified themselves too much in pretending to make a god, as if they would atone for that, they vilified themselves as much in prostrating themselves to a god that they knew the original of. And if they were deceived by the custom of their country in making such gods as those, they did no less deceive themselves when they cried unto them; though they knew they could not answer them, could not understand what they said to them, nor so much as reply Yea, or No, much less could they *save them out of their trouble*. Now, shall any that have some knowledge of, and interest in, the true and living God, thus make fools of themselves?

3. He puts it to themselves, and their own reason; Let that judge in the case; (v. 8.) "*Remember this* that has been often told you, what senseless helpless things idols are, and *show yourselves men*, men and not brutes, men and not babes; act with reason, act with resolution, act for your own interest; do a wise thing, do a brave thing, and scorn to disparage your own judgment as you do when you worship idols." Note, Sinners would become saints, if they would but show themselves men, if they would but support the dignity of their nature, and use aright its powers and capacities. "Many things you have been reminded of; *bring them again to mind*, recall them into your memories, and revolve them there; *O ye transgressors, consider your ways, remember whence ye are fallen, and repent, and so recover yourselves*"

4. He again produces incontestable proofs that he is God, that he, and none besides, is so; (v. 9.) *I am God and there is none else*, none besides me; *I am God and there is none like me*. This is that which we have need to be reminded of again and again; for proof of it, he refers,

(1.) To the sacred history; "*Remember the former things of old*, what the God of Israel did for his people in their beginnings, whether he did not that for them, which no one else could, and which the false gods did not, nor could do, for their worshippers. Remember these things, and you will own that *I am God and there is none else*." This is a good reason why we should give glory to him as a Nonsuch, and why we should not give that glory to any other, which is due to him alone, Exod. xv. 11.

(2.) To the sacred prophecy. He is God alone, for it is he only that *declares the end from the beginning*, v. 10. From the beginning of time he declared the end of time, the end of all things; Enoch prophesied, *Behold, the Lord comes*. From the beginning of a nation, he declares what the end of it will be; he told Israel what should befall them in the latter days, what *their end should be*, and wished they were so wise as to consider it, Deut. xxxii. 20, 29. From the beginning of an event he declares what the end of it will be; *known unto God are all his works*, and when he pleases, he makes them known; further than prophecy guides us it is impossible for us to *find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end*, Eccl. iii. 11. He *declares from ancient times the things that are not yet done*. Many scripture prophecies which were declared long ago, are not yet accomplished; but the accomplishment of some in the mean time is an earnest of the accomplishing of the rest in due time. By this it appears that he is *God, and none else*; it is he, and none besides, that can say, and make his words good, "My counsel shall stand, and all the powers of hell and earth cannot control or disannul it, nor all their policies correct or countermines it." As God's operations are all according to his counsels, so his counsels shall all be fulfilled in his operations, and none of his measures shall be broken, none of his designs shall miscarry. This yields abundant satisfaction to those who have bound up all their comforts in God's counsels, that his counsel shall undoubtedly stand; and if we are come to this, that whatever pleases God pleases us, nothing can contribute more to make us easy than to be assured of this, that *God will do all his pleasures*, Ps. cxxxv. 6.

The accomplishment of this particular prophecy, which relates to the elevation of Cyrus, and his agency in the deliverance of God's people out of their captivity, is mentioned for the confirmation of this truth, that the Lord is God, and there is none else; and this is a thing that shall shortly come to pass, v. 11. God by his counsel *calls a ravenous bird from the east*, a bird of prey, *Cyrus*, who, they say, had a nose like the beak of a hawk or eagle, to which some think this alludes, or, as others say, to the eagle which was his standard, as it was afterward that of the Romans, to which there is supposed to be a reference, Matth. xxiv. 28. Cyrus came from the east at God's call, for God is Lord of hosts, and of those that have hosts at command; and if God gave him a call, he will give him success. He is the man that shall execute God's counsel, though he comes from a far country, and knows nothing of the matter. Note, Even those that know not, and mind not, God's revealed will, are made use of to fulfil the counsels of his secret will, which shall all be punctually accomplished in their season by what hand he pleases. That which is here added, to ratify this particular prediction, may abundantly

show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel; "*I have spoken it by my servants the prophets, and what I have spoken is just the same with what I have purposed.*" For though God has many things in his purposes, which are not in his prophecies, he has nothing in his prophecies but what are in his purposes; and he will do it, for he will never change his mind, he will bring it to pass, for it is not in the power of any creature to control him. Observe with what majesty he says it, as one having authority; *I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; Dictum factum—No sooner said than done; I have purposed it, and he does not say, "I will take care it shall be done," but, "I will do it."* Heaven and earth shall pass away sooner than one tittle of the word of God.

II. For the conviction of those that daringly opposed the counsels of God, assurance is here given not only that they shall be accomplished, but they shall be accomplished very shortly, v. 12, 13. This is addressed to the stout-hearted, that is, either, 1. The proud and obstinate Babylonians, that are *far from righteousness*, far from doing justice, or showing mercy, to those they have power over; that say they will never let the oppressed go free, but will still detain them in spite of their petitions or God's predictions; that are far from any thing of clemency or compassion to the miserable; or, 2. The unhumiliated Jews, that have been long under the hammer; long in the furnace, but are not broken, are not melted, that, like the unbelieving, murmuring Israelites in the wilderness, think themselves far from God's righteousness, from the performance of his promise, and his appearing to judge for them, and by their distrusts set themselves at yet a further distance from it, and keep good things from themselves, as their fathers, who could not enter into the land of promise because of unbelief. This is applicable to the Jewish nation when they rejected the gospel of Christ; though they *followed after the law of righteousness, they attained not to righteousness, because they sought it not of faith*, Rom. ix. 31, 32. They perished, far from righteousness; and it was because they were *stout-hearted*, Rom. x. 3.

Now to them God says, that, whatever they think, the one in presumption, the other in despair, (1.) Salvation shall be certainly wrought for God's people. If men will not do them justice, God will, and his righteousness shall effect that for them, which men's righteousness would not reach to. He will place salvation in Zion, he will make Jerusalem a place of safety and defence to all those who will plant themselves there; thence shall salvation go forth for Israel his glory. God glories in his Israel; and he will be glorified in the salvation he designs to work out for them; it shall redound greatly to his honour. This salvation shall be in Zion, for thence the gospel shall take rise, (ch. ii. 3.) thither the Redeemer comes, (ch. lix. 20. Rom. xi. 26.) and it is Zion's King that has salvation, Zech. ix. 9. (2.) It shall be very shortly wrought; this is especially insisted on with those who thought it at a distance; "I bring near my righteousness, nearer than you think of, perhaps it is nearest of all when your straits are greatest, and your enemies most injurious; it shall not be far off when there is occasion for it, Ps. lxxxv. 9. Behold, the Judge stands before the door. My salvation shall not tarry any longer than till it is ripe, and you are ready for it; and therefore though it tarry, wait for it; wait patiently, for he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry."

## CHAP. XLVII.

Infinite Wisdom could have ordered things so that Israel might have been released, and yet Babylon unhurt; but if they will harden their hearts, and will not let the people go they must thank themselves that their ruin is

made to pave the way to Israel's release; that ruin is here, in this chapter, largely foretold, not to gratify a spirit of revenge in the people of God, who had been used barbarously by them, but to encourage their faith and hope concerning their own deliverance, and to be a type of the downfall of that great enemy of the New Testament church, which, in the Revelation, goes under the name of *Babylon*. In this chapter, we have, 1. The greatness of the ruin threatened; that Babylon should be brought down to the dust, and made completely miserable, should fall from the height of prosperity into the depth of adversity, v. 1...5. 2. The sins that provoked God to bring this ruin upon them. 1. Their cruelty to the people of God, v. 6. 2. Their pride and carnal security, v. 7...9. 3. Their confidence in themselves, and contempt of God, v. 10. 4. The use of magic arts, and their dependence upon enchantments and sorceries, which should be so far from standing them in any stead, that they should but hasten their ruin, v. 11...15.

1. **C**OME down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground: *there is no throne*, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. 2. Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. 3. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man. 4. *As for our Redeemer*, the LORD of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel. 5. Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms. 6. I was wroth with my people; I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thy hand: thou didst show them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

In these verses God, by the prophet, sends a messenger even to Babylon, like that of Jonah to Nineveh; "The time is at hand when Babylon shall be destroyed." Fair warning is thus given her, that she may by repentance prevent the ruin, and there may be a lengthening of her tranquillity.

We may observe here,

1. God's controversy with Babylon; we will begin with that, for there all the calamity begins; she has made God her Enemy, and then who can be friend her? Let her know that the righteous Judge to whom vengeance belongs, has said, (v. 3.) *I will take vengeance*. She has provoked God, and shall be reckoned with for it, when the measure of her iniquities is full. Wo to those on whom God comes to take vengeance; for who knows the power of his anger, and what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands? Were it a man like ourselves, who would be revenged on us, we might hope to be a match for him, either to make our escape from him, or to make our part good with him. But he says, "*I will not meet thee as a man*, not with the compassions of a man, but I will be to thee as a lion, and a young lion;" (Hos. v. 14.) or, rather, not with the strength of a man, which is easily resisted, but with the power of a God, which may not be resisted. Not with the justice of a man, which may be bribed or biassed, or mollified by a foolish pity, but with the justice of a God, which is strict and severe, and can never be evaded. As in pardoning the penitent, so in punishing the impenitent, he is *God, and not man*, Hos. xi. 9.

2. The particular ground of this controversy; we are sure that there is cause for it, and it is a just

cause; it is the *vengeance of his temple*, (Jer. 1.28.) it is for *violence done to Zion*, Jer. li. 35. God will plead his people's cause against them. It is acknowledged (v. 6.) that God had, in wrath, delivered his people into the hands of the Babylonians, had made use of them for the correction of his children, and had by their means *polluted his inheritance*; had left his peculiar people exposed to suffer in common with the rest of the nations, had suffered the heathen, who should have been kept at a distance, to *come into his sanctuary*, and *defile his temple*, Ps. lxxix. 1. Herein God was righteous; but the Babylonians carried the matter too far, and when they had them in their hands, (triumphing to see a people that had been so much in reputation for wisdom, holiness, and honour, brought thus low,) with a base and servile spirit they trampled upon them, *and showed them no mercy*, no, not the common instances of humanity, which the miserable are entitled to purely by their misery. They used them barbarously, and with an air of contempt, nay, and of complacency in their calamities. They were brought under the yoke; but as if that were not enough, they laid the yoke on very heavily, adding affliction to the afflicted. Nay, they laid it on the ancient, the elders in years, who were past their labour, and must sink under a yoke which those in their youthful strength would easily bear. The elders in office, those that had been judges and magistrates, and persons of the first rank, took a pride in putting them to the meanest, hardest drudgery. Jeremiah laments this, that *the faces of elders were not honoured*, Lam. v. 12. Nothing brings a surer and sorer ruin upon any people than cruelty, especially to God's Israel.

3. The terror of this controversy; she has reason to tremble when she is told who it is that has this quarrel with her, v. 4. "As for our Redeemer, our *God*, that undertakes to plead our cause as the Avenger of our blood; he has two names which speak not only comfort to us, but terror to our adversaries." (1.) "He is *the Lord of hosts*, that has all the creatures at his command, and therefore has *all power both in heaven and in earth*." Wo to those against whom the Lord fights, for the whole creation is at war with them. (2.) "He is the *Holy One of Israel*, a God in covenant with us, who has his residence among us, and will faithfully perform all the promises he has made to us." God's power and holiness are engaged against Babylon, and for Zion. This may fitly be applied to Christ, our great Redeemer: he is both Lord of hosts, and the Holy One of Israel.

4. The consequences of it to Babylon; she is called a *virgin*, because so she thought herself, though she was the mother of harlots; beautiful as a virgin, and courted by all about her; she had been called *tender and delicate*, (v. 1.) and *the lady of kingdoms*; (v. 5.) but now the case is altered.

(1.) Her honour is gone, and she must bid farewell to all her dignity; she that had sat at the upper end of the world, sat in state, and sat at ease, must now come down, and sit in the dust, as very mean, and a deep mourner, must sit on the ground, for she shall be so emptied and impoverished, that she shall not have a seat left her to sit upon.

(2.) Her power is gone, and she must bid farewell to all her dominion; she shall rule no more as she has done, nor give law as she has done to her neighbours; there is no throne, none for thee, *O daughter of the Chaldeans*. Note, Those that abuse their honour and power, provoke God to deprive them of it, and to make them *come down, and sit in the dust*.

(3.) Her ease and pleasure are gone; she shall *no more be called tender and delicate* as she has been, for she shall not only be deprived of all those things

with which she pampered herself, but shall be put to hard service, and made to feel both want and pain, which should be more than doubly grievous to her, who once *would not venture to set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy*, Deut. xxviii. 56. It is our wisdom not to use ourselves to be tender and delicate, because we know not how hardly others may use us before we die, nor what straits we may be reduced to.

(4.) Her liberty is gone, and she is brought into a state of servitude and as sore a bondage as she in her prosperity had brought others to. Even the great men of Babylon must now receive the same law from the conquerors, that they used to give to the conquered; "*Take the millstones, and grind meal*, (v. 2.) set to work, to hard labour," (like beating hemp in Bridewell,) "*which will make thee sweat so that thou must throw off all thy head dresses, and uncover thy locks*." When they were driven from one place to another, at the capricious humours of their masters, they must be forced to wade up to the middle through the waters; to *make bare the leg, and uncover the thigh*, that they might *pass over the rivers*, which would be a great mortification to them that used to ride in state; but let them not complain, for just thus they had used their captives; and *with what measure they then meted*, it is now *measured to them again*. Let those that have power use it with temper and moderation, considering that the spoke which is uppermost will be under.

(5.) All her glory, and all her glorying are gone. Instead of glory, she has ignominy; (v. 3.) *Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, and thy shame shall be seen*; according to the base and barbarous usage they commonly gave their captives, to whom, for covetousness of their clothes, they did not leave rags sufficient to cover their nakedness; so void were they of the modesty, as well as of the pity, due to the human nature. Instead of glorying, she sits silent, and *gets into darkness*, (v. 5.) ashamed to show her face, for she has quite lost her credit, and *shall no more be called the lady of kingdoms*. Note, God can make those sit silent, that used to make the greatest noise in the world, and send those into darkness, that used to make the greatest figure. Let him that glories, therefore, glory in a God that changes not, and not in any worldly wealth, pleasure, or honour, which are subject to charge.

7. And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these *things* to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. 8. Therefore hear now this *thou that art given to pleasures*, that dwell est carelessly; that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else besides me: I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: 9. But these two *things* shall come to thee in a moment, in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments. 10. For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else besides me. 11. Therefore shall evil come upon thee: thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall

fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, *which* thou shalt not know. 12. Stand now with thy enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. 13. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up and save thee from *these things* that shall come upon thee. 14. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: *there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.* 15. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, *even* thy merchants from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.

Babylon, now doomed to ruin, is here justly upbraided with her pride, luxury, and security, in the day of her prosperity, and the confidence she had in her own wisdom and forecast, and particularly in the prognostications and counsels of the astrologers. These things are mentioned, both to justify God in bringing these judgments upon her, and to mortify her, and to put her to so much the greater shame, under these judgments; for when God comes forth to take vengeance, glory belongs to him, but confusion to the sinner.

I. The Babylonians are here upbraided with their pride and haughtiness, and the conceit they had of themselves, because of their wealth and power, and the vast extent of their dominion; it was the language both of the government, and of the body of the people; *Thou sayest in thine heart*, (and God, who searches all hearts, can tell men what they say there, though they never speak it out,) *I am, and none else beside me*, v. 8. 10. The repetition of this part of the charge intimates that they said it often, and that it was very offensive to God. It is the very word that God has often said concerning himself, *I am, and none else beside me*; denoting his self-existence, his infinite and incomparable perfections, and his sole supremacy; all this Babylon pretends to. No wonder if she that assumed a power to make what gods and goddesses she pleased for the people to worship, made herself one among the rest. It is presumption to say of any creature, It is, and there is not its like, there is none beside it; for creatures stand nearly upon a level with one another; but it is insufferable arrogance for any to say so of themselves, and an evidence of their self-ignorance.

II. They are upbraided with their luxury and love of ease; (v. 8.) *"Thou that art given to pleasures, art a slave to them, art in them as in thine element, and, that thou mayest enjoy them without disturbance or interruption, dwellest carelessly, and layest nothing to heart."* Great wealth and plenty are great temptations to sensuality, and where there is fulness of bread, there is commonly abundance of idleness. But if those that are given to pleasures, and dwell carelessly, would but hear this, that *for all these things God shall bring them into judgment*, it would be a damp to their mirth, an allay to their pleasure, and would find them something to be in care about.

III. They are upbraided with their carnal securi-

ty, and their vain confidence of the perpetuity of their pomps and pleasures. This is much insisted on here. Observe,

1. The cause of their security. They *therefore* thought themselves safe and out of danger, not because they were ignorant of the uncertainty of all earthly enjoyments, and the inevitable fate that attends states and kingdoms, as well as particular persons, but *because they did not lay this to heart*, did not apply it to themselves, nor give it a due consideration. They lulled themselves asleep in ease and pleasure, and dreamt of nothing else but that *to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant*. They did not remember the latter end of it; nor the latter end of their prosperity, that it is a fading flower, and will wither; nor the latter end of their iniquity, that it will be bitterness, that the day will come when their injustice and oppression must be reckoned for and punished. *She did not remember her latter end*; so some read it; she forgot that her day will come to fall, and what would be in the end hereof. It was the ruin of Jerusalem, (Lam. i. 9.) that *she remembered not her last end, therefore she came down wonderfully*; and it was Babylon's ruin too. *Therefore* the children of men are easy, and think themselves safe, in their sinful ways, because they never think of death, and judgment, and their future state.

2. The ground of their security. They trusted in their wickedness, and in their wisdom, v. 10. (1.) Their power and wealth, which they had gotten by fraud and oppression, were their confidence. Thou hast *trusted in thy wickedness*, as Doeg, Ps. lii. 7. Many have so debauched their own consciences, and are got to such a pitch of daring wickedness, that they stick at nothing; and this they trust to, to carry them through these difficulties which embarrass men who make conscience of what they say and do. They doubt not but they shall be too hard for all their enemies, because they dare lie, and kill, and forswear themselves, and do any thing for their interest. Thus they trust in their wickedness to secure them, which is the only thing that will ruin them. (2.) Their policy and craft, which they called their *wisdom*, were their confidence. They thought they could outwit all mankind, and therefore might set all their enemies at defiance; but their wisdom and knowledge perverted them, and *turned them out of the way*, made them forget themselves, and the preparation necessary to be made for hereafter.

3. The expressions of their security. Three things this proud and haughty monarchy said, in her security; (1.) *"I shall be a lady for ever."* She looked upon the patent of her honour to be not merely during the pleasure of the sovereign Lord, the Fountain of honour, or during her own good behaviour, but to be perpetual to the present generation and their heirs and successors for ever; she is not only proud that she is a lady, but confident that she shall be a lady for ever. Thus the New Testament Babylon says, *I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow*, Rev. xviii. 7. These ladies mistake themselves, and consider not their latter end, who think they shall be ladies for ever, for death will shortly lay their honour with them in the dust. Saints shall be saints for ever, but lords and ladies will not be so for ever. (2.) *"I shall not sit as a widow, in solitude and sorrow, shall never lose the power and wealth I am thus wedded to, the monarchy shall never want a monarch to espouse and protect it, and be a husband to the state; nor shall I know the loss of children."* She was as confident of the continuance of the numbers of her people as of the dignity of her prince, and had no fear of being either deposed or depopulated. Those that are in the height of prosperity, are apt to fancy them-



selves out of the reach of adverse fate. (3.) "No one sees me when I do aniss, and therefore there will be none to call me to an account." It is common for sinners to promise themselves impunity, because they promise themselves secrecy, in their wicked ways. They trust to their wicked arts and designs to stand them in stead, because they think they have carried them on so plausibly that none can discern the wickedness and deceit of them.

4. The punishment of their security. It shall be their ruin; and it will be, (1.) A complete ruin, the ruin of all their comforts and confidences; "*These two things shall come upon thee, (the very two things that thou didst set at defiance,) loss of children, and widowhood.* Both thy princes and thy people shall be cut off, so that thou shalt be no more a government, no more a nation." Note, God often brings upon secure sinners those very mischiefs which they least feared, and thought themselves in least danger of; "They shall come upon thee in their perfection, with all their aggravating circumstances, and without any thing to alloy or mitigate them." Afflictions to God's children are not afflictions in perfection. Widowhood is not to them a calamity in perfection, for they have this to comfort themselves with, that their Maker is their Husband; loss of children is not, for he is better to them than ten sons; but on his enemies they come in perfection. Widowhood and loss of children are either of them great griefs, but both together great indeed. Naomi thinks she may well be called *Marah*, when she is *left both of her sons and of her husband*; (Ruth i. 5.) and yet on her these evils did not come in perfection, for she had two daughters-in-law left, that were comforts to her; but on Babylon they come in perfection, she has no comfort remaining. (2.) It shall be a sudden and surprising ruin. The evil shall come in one day, nay in a moment, which will make it much the more terrible, especially to those that were so very secure. "*Evil shall come upon thee, and thou shalt have neither time nor way to provide against it, or to prepare for it; for thou shalt not know whence it rises, and therefore shalt not know where to stand upon thy guard.*" *Thou shalt not know the morning thereof*; so the Hebrew phrase is. We know just when and where the day will break, and the sun rise, but we know not what the day, when it is come, will bring forth, nor when or where trouble will arise; perhaps the storm may come from that point of the compass which we little thought of. Babylon pretended to great wisdom and knowledge, (v. 10.) but with all her knowledge cannot foresee, nor with all her wisdom prevent, the ruin threatened; "*Desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, as a thief in the night, which thou shalt not know, which thou little thoughtest of.*" Fair warning was indeed given them by this and other prophets of the Lord, of this desolation; but they slighted that notice, and would give no credit to it, and therefore justly is it so ordered, that they should have no other notice of it, but that, partly through their own security, and partly through the swiftness and subtlety of the enemy, when it came it should be a perfect surprise to them. Those that slight the warnings of the written word, let them not expect any other premonition. (3.) It shall be an irresistible ruin, and such as they should have no fence against; "*Mischief shall come upon thee so suddenly, that thou shalt have no time to turn thee in, so strongly, that thou shalt not be able to make head against it, and to put it off and save thyself.*" There is no opposing of the judgments of God when they come with commission. Babylon herself, with all her wealth, and power, and multitude, is not able to put off the mischief that comes.

IV. They are upbraided with their divinations, their magical and astrological arts and sciences,

which the Chaldeans, above any other nation, were notorious for, and from them other nations borrowed all their learning of that kind.

I. This is here spoken of as one of their provoking sins, which would bring the judgments of God upon them, v. 9. These evils shall come upon thee to punish thee for the multitude of thy sorceries, and the great abundance of thine enchantments. Witchcraft is a sin in its own nature exceeding heinous; it is giving that honour to the devil, which is due to God only, making God's enemy our guide, and the father of lies our oracle; in Babylon it was a national sin, and had the protection and countenance of the government; conjurers, for aught that appears, were their privy counsellors, and prime ministers of state. And shall not God visit for these things? Observe what a multitude, what a great abundance of sorceries and enchantments there were among them; such a bewitching sin this was, that, when it was once admitted, it spread like wildfire, and they never knew any end of it; the deceived and the deceivers both increased strangely.

II. It is here spoken of as one of their vain confidences, which they relied much upon, but should be deceived in, for it would not serve so much as to give them notice of the judgments coming, much less to guard against them.

(1.) They are here upbraided with the mighty pains they had taken about their sorceries and enchantments; Thou hast laboured in them from thy youth. They trained up their young men in these studies, and those that applied themselves to them were indefatigable in their labours about them; reading books, making observations, trying experiments. Well, let them stand up now with their enchantments, and try their skill in the critical moment. Let them make a stand, if they can, in opposition to the invading enemy, let them stand to offer their service to their country; but to what purpose? "*Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels* of this kind, thou hast advised with them all, but hast received no satisfaction from them; the different schemes they have erected, and the different judgments they have given, have but increased thy perplexity, and tired thee out." In the multitude of such counsellors there is no safety.

(2.) They are upbraided with the variety they had of such kind of people among them, v. 13. They had their astrologers, or viewers of the heavens, that did not consider them, as David, to behold the wisdom and power of God in them, but, under pretence of foretelling future events by them, they viewed the heavens, and forgot him that made them, and set their dominion on the earth, (Job. xxxviii. 33.) and has himself dominion over them, for he rides on the heavens. They had their stargazers, who, by the motions of the stars, their conjunctions and oppositions, read the doom of states and kingdoms; they had their monthly prognosticators, their almanack-makers, that told what weather it should be, or what news they should have each month. The great stock they had of these, was what they valued themselves much upon; but they were all cheats, and their art a sham. I confess, I see not how the judicial astrology which some now pretend to, by the rules of which they undertake to prophesy concerning things to come, can be distinguished from that of the Chaldeans, and therefore how it can escape the censure and contempt which this text lays that under; yet I fear there are some who study their almanacks, and regard them and their prognostications, more than their Bibles and the prophecies there.

(3.) They are upbraided with the utter inability and insufficiency of all these pretenders to do them any kindness in the day of their distress. Let them see whether with the help of their enchantments

they can prevail against their enemies, or profit themselves, *inspirit* their own forces, or *dispirit* those that came against them, v. 12. Let them see what service those can do them, who make a trade of divination; "*Let them stand up*, and either by their power save thee from these evils that are coming upon thee, or by their foresight make such a discovery of them beforehand, that thou mayest by needful precautions save thyself;" as Elisha, by notifying to the king of Israel the motions of the Syrian army, enabled him to *save himself not once nor twice*, 2 Kings vi. 10. This baffling of the diviners was literally fulfilled, when, the night that Babylon was taken, and Belshazzar slain, all his astrologers, soothsayers, and wise men, were quite nonplused with the handwriting on the wall, that pronounced the fatal sentence, Dan. v. 8.

(4.) They are upbraided with the fall of the wise men themselves in the common ruin, v. 14. *They* are unlikely to stand their friends in any stead, who cannot secure themselves; they are as stubble at the best, worthless and useless, and they shall be as stubble before a consuming fire. The Persians, to make room for their own wise men, will cut off those of Babylon, that fire shall burn them, and they shall not *deliver themselves from the power of the flame*. They can expect no other than to be devoured, who by their sins make themselves fuel to a devouring fire. When God kindles a fire among them, it shall not be a coal to warm at, and a fire to sit before, but a coal to burn them. Or, rather, it denotes that they shall be utterly consumed by the judgments of God, burnt quite to ashes, and there shall not remain one live coal to do any body any service; for *when God judges, he will overcome*.

*Lastly*, They are upbraided with their merchants, and those they dealt with, (v. 15.) such as they dealt with from their youth, either, [1.] In a way of consultation; these astrologers that dealt in the black art, they always loved to be dealing with, and they were in effect their merchants; fortune-telling was one of the best trades in Babylon, and those that followed that trade, probably lived as such, and got as much money as the richest merchants; yet, when some of them were devoured, others fled their country, every one to his quarter, and there was none to save Babylon. Miserable comforters are they all. Or, [2.] In a way of commerce. As their astrologers, with whom they had laboured, failed them, so did their merchants; they took care to secure their own effects, and then valued not what became of Babylon. They *wandered every one to his own quarter*, each man shifted for his own safety, but none would offer to lend an helping hand, no not to a city by which they had got so much money. Every one was for himself, but few for his friends. The New Testament Babylon is lamented by the merchants that were made rich by her, but they very prudently stand afar off to lament her, (Rev. xviii. 15.) not willing to attempt any thing for her succour. Happy they who by faith and prayer deal with one that will be a *very present Help in time of trouble!*

## CHAP. XLVIII.

God having, in the foregoing chapter, reckoned with the Babylonians, and showed them their sins, and the desolation that was coming upon them for their sins, to show that he hates sin wherever he finds it, and will not connive at it in his own people, comes, in this chapter, to show the house of Jacob their sins, but, withal, the mercy God had in store for them notwithstanding; and he therefore sets their sins in order before them, that by their repentance and reformation they might be prepared for that mercy. I. He charges them with hypocrisy in that which is good, and obstinacy in that which is evil, especially in their idolatry, notwithstanding the many convincing proofs God had given them, that he is God alone, v. 1-8. II. He assures them that their deliver-

ance would be wrought purely for the sake of God's own name, and not for any merit of theirs, v. 9, 11. III. He encourages them to depend purely upon God's power and promise for this deliverance, v. 12, 15. IV. He shows them that as it was by their own sin that they brought themselves into captivity, so it would be only by the grace of God that they would obtain the necessary preparatives for their enlargement, v. 16, 19. V. He proclaims their release, yet with a proviso that the wicked shall have no benefit by it, v. 20, 22.

1. **H**EAR ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah; which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, *but* not in truth nor in righteousness. 2. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The LORD of hosts *is* his name. 3. I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did *them* suddenly, and they came to pass. 4. Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck *is* an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; 5. I have even from the beginning declared *it* to thee; before it came to pass I shewed *it* thee: lest thou shouldst say, Mine idol hath done them; and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them. 6. Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare *it*? I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. 7. They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldst say, Behold, I knew them. 8. Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time *that* thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.

We may observe here,

I. The hypocritical profession which many of the Jews made of religion and relation to God; to those who made such a profession, the prophet is here ordered to apply himself for their conviction and humiliation, that they might own God's justice in what he had brought upon them.

Now observe here,

1. How high their profession of religion soared, what a fair show they made in the flesh, and how far they went toward heaven, what a good livery they wore, and what a good face they put upon a very bad heart. (1.) They were the *house of Jacob*, they had a place and a name in the visible church, *Jacob have I loved*, Jacob is God's chosen, and they are not only retainers to his family, but descendants from him. (2.) They were *called by the name of Israel*, an honourable name; they were of that people to whom pertained both the giving of the law, and the promises. *Israel* signifies a *prince with God*; the people prided themselves in being of that princely race. (3.) They *came forth out of the waters of Judah*, and thence were called *Jews*; they were of the royal tribe, the tribe of which Shiloh was to come, the tribe that adhered to God when the rest revolted. (4.) They *swore by the*

me of the Lord, and thereby owed him to be the true God, and their God, and gave glory to him as the righteous Judge of all. They swore to the name of the Lord; (so it may be read;) they took an oath of allegiance to him as their King, and joined themselves to him in covenant. (5.) They made mention of the God of Israel in their prayers and praises; they often spake of him, observed his memorials, and pretended to be very mindful of him. (6.) They called themselves of the holy city, and, when they were captives in Babylon, purely from a principle of honour, and jealously for their native country, they valued themselves upon their interest in it. Many, who are themselves unholly, are proud of their relation to the church, the holy city. (7.) They stayed themselves upon the God of Israel, and boasted of his promises, and his covenant with them; they leaned on the Lord, Mic. iii. 11. And if they were asked concerning their God, they could say, "The Lord of hosts is his name, the Lord of all," happy we therefore, and very great, who have relation to him!

2. How low their profession of religion sunk, for all this. It was all in vain, for it was all a jest, it was not in truth and righteousness. Their hearts were not true nor right in these professions. Note, All our religious professions avail nothing further than they are made in truth and righteousness. If we be not sincere in them, we do but take the name of the Lord our God in vain.

II. The means God used, and the method he took, to keep them close to himself, and to prevent their turning aside to idolatry. The many excellent laws he gave them, with their sanctions, and the hedges about them, it seems, would not serve to restrain them from that sin which did most easily beset them, and therefore to those God added remarkable prophecies, and remarkable providences in pursuance of those prophecies, which were all designed to convince them that their God was the only true God, and that it was therefore both their duty and interest to adhere to him.

1. He both dignified and favoured them with remarkable prophecies; (v. 3.) *I have declared the former things from the beginning.* Nothing material happened to their nation from its original, which was not prophesied of before—their bondage in Egypt, their deliverance thence, the situation of their tribes in Canaan, &c. All these things went forth out of God's mouth, and he showed them. Herein they were honoured above any nation, and even their curiosity gratified—their prophecies were such as they could rely upon, and such as concerned themselves and their own nation; and they were all verified by the accomplishment of them; "I did them suddenly, when they were least expected by themselves or others, and therefore could not be foreseen by any but a divine prescience; *I did them suddenly, and they came to pass;*" for what God does he does effectually. The very calamities they were now groaning under in Babylon, God did from the beginning declare to them by Moses; as the certain consequences of their apostasy from God, Lev. xxvi. 31, &c. Deut. xxviii. 36, &c.—xxix. 28. He also declared to them their return to God, and to their own land again, Deut. xxx. 4, &c. Lev. xxvi. 44, 45. Thus he showed them how he would deal with them long before it came to pass. Let them compare their present state together with the deliverance they had now in prospect with what was written in the law, and they would find the scripture exactly fulfilled.

2. He both dignified and favoured them with remarkable providences; (v. 6.) *I have showed thee new things from this time.* Beside the general view given from the beginning of God's proceedings with them, he showed them new things by the prophets of

their own day, and created them; they were hidden things which they could not otherwise know, as the prophecy concerning Cyrus, and the exact time of their release out of Babylon; these things God created new. Their restoration was in effect their creation, and they had a promise of it not from the beginning, but of late, for, to prevent their apostasy from God, or to recover them, prophecy was kept up among them. Yet it was told them when they could not come to the knowledge of it any other way than by divine revelation; "Consider," (says God,) "how much soever it is talked of now among you, and expected, it was told you by the prophets, when it was the furthest thing in your thoughts, when you had not heard it, when you had not known it, nor had any reason to expect it, and when your ear was not opened concerning it, (v. 7, 8.) when the thing seemed utterly impossible, and you would scarcely have given any one the hearing, who should have told you of it." God had showed them hidden things which were out of the reach of their knowledge, and done for them great things, out of the reach of their power; "Now," says he, (v. 6.) "thou hast heard; see all this. Thou hast heard the prophecy; see the accomplishment of it, and observe whether the word and works of God do not exactly agree; and will ye not declare it, that as you have heard, so you have seen? Will you not own that the Lord is the true God, the only true God, that he has the knowledge and power which no creature has, and which none of the gods of the nations can pretend to? Will you not own that your God has been a good God to you? Declare this, to his honour, and your own shame, who have dealt so deceitfully with him, and preferred others before him."

III. The reasons why God would take this method with them.

1. Because he would anticipate their boastings of themselves and their idols. (1.) God by his prophets told them beforehand of their deliverance, lest they should attribute the doing of it to their idols. Thus he saw it necessary to secure the glory of that to himself, which otherwise would have been given by some of them to their graven images; "I spake of it," (says God,) "*lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol has done it, or has commanded it to be done,*" v. 5. There were those that would be apt to say so, and so would be confirmed in their idolatry by that which was intended to cure them of it. But they would now be for ever precluded from saying this; for if the idols had done it, the prophets of the idols would have foretold it; but the prophets of the Lord having foretold it, it was no doubt the power of the Lord that effected it. (2.) God foretold it by his prophets, lest they should assume the foresight of it to themselves. Those that were not so profane as to have ascribed the thing itself to an idol, were yet so proud as to have pretended that by their own sagacity they foresaw it, if God had not been beforehand with them and spoken first; *lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them.* Thus vain men, who would be thought wise, commonly undervalue a thing which is really great and surprising, with this suggestion, that it was no more than they expected, and they knew it would come to this. To anticipate this, and that this boasting might for ever be excluded, God told them of it before the day, when as yet they dreamed not of it. God has said and done enough to prevent men's boastings of themselves, and that *no flesh may glory in his presence*, which, if it have not the intended effect, will aggravate the sin and ruin of the proud; and, sooner or later, *every mouth shall be stopped, and all flesh shall become silent before God.*

3. Because he would leave them inexcusable in their obstinacy. Therefore he took this pains with them, because he knew they were obstinate, v. 4.

He knew they were so obstinate and perverse, that if he had not supported the doctrine of providence by prophecy, they would have had the impudence to deny it, and would have said, that their idol had done that which God did. He knew very well, (1.) How wilful they would be, and how fully bent they would be upon that which is evil; *I knew that thou wast hard*; so the word is. There were prophecies as well as precepts, which God gave them because of the hardness of their hearts; "*Thy neck is an iron sinew, unapt to yield, and submit to the yoke of God's commandments, unapt to turn, and look back upon his dealings with thee, or look up to his displeasure against thee; not flexible to the will of God, nor pliable to his intentions, not manageable by his word or providence. Thy brow is brass; thou art impudent, and canst not blush; insolent, and wilt not fear or give back, but will thrust on in the way of thine heart.*" God uses means to bring sinners to comply with him, though he knows they are obstinate. (2.) How deceitful they would be, and insincere in that which is good, *v. 8.* God sent his prophets to them, but they did not hear, they would not know, and it was no more than was expected, considering what they had been; *Thou wast called, and not mis-called, a transgressor from the womb.* Ever since they were first formed into a people, they were prone to idolatry; they brought with them out of Egypt a strange addictedness to that sin; and they were murmurers as soon as ever they began their march to Canaan. They were justly upbraided with it then, Deut. ix. 7, 24. Therefore *I knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously.* God foresaw their apostasy, and gave this reason for it, that he had always found them false and fickle, Deut. xxxi. 16, 27, 29. This is applicable to particular persons; we are all born children of disobedience, we were called *transgressors from the womb*, and therefore it is easy to foresee that we will deal treacherously, very treacherously. Where original sin is, actual sin will follow of course. God knows it, and yet deals not with us according to our deserts.

9. For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain from thee, that I cut thee not off. 10. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. 11. For mine own sake, *even* for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should *my name* be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another. 12. Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; *I am* he: *I am* the first, I also *am* the last. 13. My hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: *when* I call unto them, they stand up together. 14. All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these things? The LORD hath loved him; he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm *shall be* on the Chaldeans. 15. I, *even* I, have spoken; yea, I have called him; I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.

The deliverance of God's people out of their captivity in Babylon was a thing upon many accounts so improbable, that there was need of line upon line for the encouragement of the faith and hope of God's people concerning it. Two things were discouraging

to them; their own unworthiness that God should do it for them, and the many difficulties in the thing itself; now, in these verses, both these discouragements are removed, for here is,

I. A reason why God would do it for them, though they were unworthy; not for their sake, be it known to them, but *for his name's sake, for his own sake, v. 9.—11.*

1. It is true, they had been very provoking, and God had been justly angry with them—their captivity was the punishment of their iniquity; and if, when he had them in Babylon, he had left them to pine away and perish there, and made the desolations of their country perpetual, he had but dealt with them according to their sins, and it was what such a sinful people might expect from an angry God. "But," says God, "*I will defer mine anger,*" (or, rather, *stifle and suppress it,*) "*I will make it appear that I am slow to wrath, and will refrain from thee, not pour upon thee what I justly might, that I should cut thee off from being a people.*" And why will God thus stay his hand? *For my name's sake*; because this people was called by his name, and made profession of his name, and, if they were cut off, the enemies would blaspheme his name. *It is for my praise*; because it would redound to the honour of his mercy, to spare and relieve them, and if he continued them to be to him a people, they might be to him for a name and a praise.

2. It is true, they were very corrupt and ill-disposed, but God would himself refoe them, and make them fit for the mercy he intended for them; "*I have refined thee, that thou mightest be made a vessel of honour.*" Though he does not find them meet for his favour, he will make them so. And this accounts for his bringing them into the trouble, and continuing them in it so long as he did; it was not to cut them off, but to do them good; it was to refine them, but not as silver, or *with* silver, not so thoroughly as men refine their silver, which they continue in the furnace till all the dross is separated from it; if God should take that course with them, they should be always in the furnace, for they are all dross, and, as such, might justly be put away, (Ps. cxix. 119.) as reprobate silver, Jer. vi. 30. He therefore takes them as they are, refined in part only, and not thoroughly. "*I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction,* I have made thee a choice one by the good which the affliction has done thee, and then designed thee for great things." Many have been brought home to God as chosen vessels, and a good work of grace been begun in them, in the furnace of affliction. Affliction is no bar to God's choice, but subservient to his purpose.

3. It is true, they could not pretend to merit at God's hand so great a favour as their deliverance out of Babylon, which would put such an honour upon them, and bring them so much joy; Therefore, says God, *For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it, v. 11.* See how the emphasis is laid upon that, for it is a reason that cannot fail, and therefore the resolution grounded upon it cannot fall to the ground. God will do it, not because he owes them such a favour, but to save the honour of his own name, that that may not be polluted by the insolent triumphs of the heathen, who, in triumphing over Israel, thought they triumphed over the God of Israel, and imagined their gods too hard for him. This was plainly the language of Belshazzar's revels, when he profaned the holy vessels of God's temple at the same time when he praised his idols, (Dan. v. 2.) and of the Babylonians' demand, (Ps. cxxxvii. 3.) *Sing us one of the songs of Zion.* God will therefore deliver his people, because he will not suffer his glory to be thus given to another. Moses pleaded this often with

God, Lord, *what will the Egyptians say?* Note, God is jealous for the honour of his own name, and will not suffer the wrath of man to proceed any further than he will make it turn to his praise. And it is matter of comfort to God's people, that, whatever comes of them, God will secure his own honour; and, as far as is necessary to that, God will work deliverance for them.

II. Here is a proof that God could do it for them, though they were unable to help themselves, and the thing seemed altogether impracticable. Let Jacob and Israel hearken to this, and believe it, and take the comfort of it. They are God's *called*, called according to his purpose, called by him out of Egypt, (Hos. xi. 1.) and now out of Babylon, a people whom with a distinguishing favour he calls by name, and calls to; they are his called, for they are called to him, called by his name, and called his; and therefore he will look after them; and they may be assured that as he will deliver them for his own sake, so he will deliver them by his own strength; they need not fear then, for,

1. He is God alone, and the eternal God; (v. 12.) "*I am he*, who can do what I will, and will do what is best; he whom none can compare with, much less contend with; *I am the First, I also am the Last.*" Who can be too quick for him that is the First, or prevent him? Who can be too hard for him that is the Last, and will keep the field against all opposers, and will reign till they are all made his footstool? What room then is left to doubt of their deliverance, when *he* undertakes it, whose designs cannot but be well laid, for he is the First; and well executed, for he is the Last: as for this God, his work is perfect.

2. He is the God that made the world, and he that did that can do any thing, v. 13. Look we down? We see the earth firm under us, and feel it so, it was his hand that laid out the foundation of it. Look we up? We see the heavens spread out as a canopy over our heads, and it was his hand that spread them, that spanned them, that stretched them out, and did it by an exact measure, as the workman sometimes metes out his work by spans. This intimates that God has a vast reach, and can compass designs of the greatest extent. *If the palm of his right hand* (so the margin reads it) has gone so far as to stretch out the heavens, what will he do with his outstretched arm? Yet this is not all; he has not only made the heavens and the earth, and therefore he in whom our hope and help is, is omnipotent, (Ps. cxxiv. 8.) but he has the command of all the hosts of both; when he calls them into his service, to go on his errand, they stand up together, they come at the call, they answer to their names; "*Here we are*, what wilt thou have us to do?" They stand up, not only in reverence to their Creator, but in a readiness to execute his orders; they stand up together unanimously, concurring, and helping one another in the service of their Maker. If God therefore will deliver his people, he cannot be at a loss for instruments to be employed in it.

3. He has already foretold it, and, having infinite knowledge, so that he foresaw it, no doubt he has almighty power to effect it; "*All ye of the house of Jacob*, assemble yourselves, and hear this for your comfort, Which among them, among the gods of the heathen, or their wise men, has declared these things, or could declare them?" v. 14. They had no foresight of them at all, but those who consulted them were very confident that Babylon should be a lady for ever, and Israel a perpetual slave; and their oracles did not give them the least hint to the contrary, to undeceive them; whereas God by his prophets had given notice to the Jews, long before, of their captivity, and the destruction of Jerusalem; as he had now likewise given them notice of their

release; (v. 15.) *I, even I, have spoken*; and he would not have spoken it, if he could not have made it good: none could outsee him, and therefore we may be sure that none could outdo him.

4. The person is pitched upon, who is to be employed in this service, and the measures are concerted in the divine counsels, which are unalterable. Cyrus is the man who must do it; and it tends much to strengthen our assurance that a thing shall be done, when we are particularly informed how and by whom. It is not left at uncertainty who shall do it, but the matter is fixed: (1.) It is one whom God is well pleased in, upon this account, because he is designed for this service; *The Lord has loved him*; (v. 14.) he has done him this favour, this honour to make him an instrument of the redemption of his people, and therein a type of the great Redeemer, God's beloved Son, *in whom he was well pleased*. Those God does a great kindness to, and has a great kindness for, whom he makes serviceable to his church. (2.) It is one whom God will give authority and commission to; *I have called him*, have given him a sufficient warrant, and therefore will bear him out. (3.) It is one whom God will by a series of providences lead to this service; "*I have brought him from a far country*, brought him to engage against Babylon, brought him step by step, quite beyond his own intentions." Whom God calls he will bring, will cause them to come, (so the word is,) to come at the call. (4.) It is one whom God will own, and give success to. Cyrus will do God's pleasure on Babylon, that which it is his pleasure should be done, and which he will be pleased with the doing of, though Cyrus has ends of his own to serve, and has no regard either to the will of God, or to his favour, in the doing of it. *His arm*, Cyrus's army, and in it God's arm, *shall come, and be upon the Chaldeans*, to bring them down; (v. 14.) for if God call him, and bring him, he will certainly *make his way prosperous*, v. 15. Then we may hope to prosper in our way, when we follow a divine call and guidance.

16. Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there *am I*: and now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me. 17. Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; *I am the Lord thy God* which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way *that* thou shouldest go. 18. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea; 19. Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me. 20. Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it *even* to the end of the earth; say ye, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob. 21. And they thirsted not *when* he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them; he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out. 22. *There is no peace*, saith the Lord, unto the wicked

Here, as before, Jacob and Israel are summoned to hearken to the prophet speaking in God's name

or rather to God speaking in and by the prophet, and that as a type of the great Prophet by whom God has in these last days spoken unto us, and that is sufficient; *Come ye near* therefore, and *hear this*. Note, Those that would hear and understand what God says, must come near, and approach to him; let them come as near as they can; let those that have hearkened to the tempter, now come near, and hear this, that they may be confirmed in their resolutions to serve God. Those that draw nigh to God may depend upon this, that his secret shall be with them. Here,

I. God refers them to what he had both said to them, and done for them, formerly, which if they would reflect upon, they might thence fetch great encouragement to trust in God at this time. 1. He had always spoken plainly to them, *from the beginning*, by Moses and all the prophets; *I have not spoken in secret*, but publicly, from the top of mount Sinai, and in the chief places of concourse, the solemn assemblies of their tribes; he did not deliver his oracles obscurely and ambiguously, but so that they might be understood, Hab. ii. 2. 2. He had always acted wonderfully for them; *From the time* that they were first formed into a people, *there am I*, there have I been resident among them, and presiding in their affairs. He sent them prophets, raised them up judges, and frequently appeared for them. And therefore there I will be still. He that has been with his people hitherto, will be to the end.

II. The prophet himself, as a type of the great Prophet, asserts his own commission to deliver this message; *Now the Lord God* (the same that spake from the beginning, and did not speak in secret,) *has by his Spirit sent me*, v. 16. The Spirit of God is here spoken of as a person distinct from the Father and the Son, and having a divine authority to send prophets. Note, Whom God sends the Spirit sends. Those whom God commissions for any service, the Spirit in some measure qualifies for it: and those may speak boldly, and must be heard obediently, whom God and his Spirit send. As that which the prophet says to the same purport with this (*ch. lxi. 1.*) is applied to Christ, (*Luke iv. 21.*) so may this be; the Lord God sent him, and he had the Spirit without measure.

III. God by the prophet sends them a gracious message for their support and comfort under their affliction. The preface to this message is both awful and encouraging; (*v. 17.*) *Thus saith Jehovah*, the eternal God *thy Redeemer*, that has often been so, that has engaged to be so, and will be faithful to the engagement, for he is *the Holy One*, that cannot deceive, *the Holy One of Israel*, that will not deceive them. The same words that introduce the law, and gave authority to that, introduce the promise, and gave validity to that; *"I am the Lord thy God, whom thou mayest depend upon as in relation to thee, and in covenant with thee."*

1. Here is the good work which God undertakes to fulfil in them; he that is their Redeemer, in order to that, will be, (1.) Their Instructor; *"I am thy God that teaches thee to profit"*, teaches thee such things as are profitable for thee, things that belong to thy peace." By *this* God shows himself to be a God in covenant with us, by his *teaching us*; (*Heb. viii. 10, 11.*) and none teaches like him, for he gives an understanding. Whom God redeems, he teaches; whom he designs to deliver out of their afflictions, he first teaches to profit by their afflictions, makes them partakers of his holiness; for that is the *profit for which he chastens us*, *Heb. xii. 10.* (2.) Their Guide; *he leads them to the way, and in the way by which they should go*; he not only enlightens their eyes, but directs their steps; by his grace he leads them in the way of duty, by his providence he leads

them in the way of deliverance. Happy they that are under such a guidance!

2. Here is the good will which God declares he had for them, by his good wishes concerning them, *v. 18, 19.* He had indeed brought them into captivity, but it was their own fault, nor did he afflict them willingly. (1.) As when he gave them his law, he earnestly wished they might be obedient, (*O that there were such a heart in them!* *Deut. v. 29.* *O that they were wise!* *Deut. xxxii. 29.*) so, when he had punished them for the breach of his law, he wished they had been obedient; *O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments!* *O that my people had hearkened unto me!* *Ps. lxxxi. 13.* This confirms what God has said and sworn, that *he has no pleasure in the death of sinners.* (2.) He assures them that if they had been obedient, that would not only have prevented their captivity, but would have advanced and perpetuated their prosperity. He had abundance of good things ready to bestow upon them, if *their sins had not turned them away*, *ch. lix. 1, 2.* [1.] They should have been carried on in a constant uninterrupted stream of prosperity: *"Thy peace should have been as a river, thou shouldst have enjoyed a series of mercies, one continually following another, as the waters of a river, which always last;"* *Labitur, et labetur in omne volubilis avum—It flows, and will for ever flow*; not like the waters of a land-flood, which are soon gone. [2.] Their virtue and honour, and the justice of their cause, should in all cases have borne down opposition by their own strength, *as the waves of the sea*; such should their righteousness have been, nothing should have stood before it; whereas now they have been disobedient, the current of their prosperity was interrupted, and their righteousness overpowered. [3.] The rising generation should have been very numerous, and very prosperous, whereas they were now very few, as appears by the small number of the returning captives, (*Ezra ii. 64.*) not so many as of one tribe when they came out of Egypt; they should have been *numberless as the sand*, according to the promise (*Gen. xxii. 17.*) which they had forfeited the benefit of; *"The offspring of thy bowels had been innumerable, like the gravel of the sea, if thy righteousness had been irresistible and unconquerable as the waves of the sea."* [4.] The honour of Israel had still been unstained, untouched; *His name should not have been cut off*, as now it is in the land of Israel, which is either desolate, or inhabited by strangers; nor should it have been *destroyed from before God*. We cannot reckon the name either of a family or of a kingdom destroyed, till it is destroyed from before God, till it ceases to be a name in his holy place. Now God tells them thus what he would have done for them, if they had persevered in their obedience; *First*, That they might be the more humbled for their sins, by which they had forfeited such rich mercies. Note, *This* should engage us, I might say, enrage us, against sin, that it has not only deprived us of the good things we have enjoyed, but prevented the good things God had in store for us. It will make the misery of the disobedient the more intolerable, to think how happy they might have been. *Secondly*, That his mercy might appear the more illustrious in working deliverance and salvation for them, though they had forfeited it, and rendered themselves unworthy of it. Nothing but a prerogative of mercy would have saved them.

3. Here is assurance given of the great work which God designed to work for them, even their salvation out of their captivity, when he had accomplished his work in them.

(1.) Here is a commission granted them to leave Babylon; God proclaimed it long before Cyrus did, that whoever would, might return to his own land,



(v. 20.) "You have a full discharge sent you, *go ye forth out of Babylon*; the prison-doors are thrown open, and the trumpet sounds, proclaiming a release." Perhaps, with this word, as a means, the Spirit of the Lord stirred up the spirits of those that did take the benefit of Cyrus's proclamation; (Ezra i. 5.) *Flee ye from the Chaldeans*, not with an ignominious, stolen flight, as Jacob fled from Laban, but with a holy disdain, as scorning to stay any longer among them; flee ye, not silently and sorrowfully, but with a voice, with a voice of singing, as they fled of old out of Egypt, Exod. xv. 1.

(2.) Here is the news of this sent to all parts; "Let it be declared, let it be told, let it be uttered, make it to be heard by the most remote, by the most remiss, send the tidings of it by word of mouth, send it by writing from city to city, from kingdom to kingdom, even to the utmost regions, *to the ends of the earth*." This was a figure of the publishing of the gospel to all the world; but that brings glad tidings which all the world is concerned in, this only that which it is fit all should take notice of, that they may be invited by it to forsake their idols, and come into the service of the God of Israel. Let them all know then,

[1.] That these whom God owns for his are such as he has dearly bought and paid for; *The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob*; he has done it formerly, when he brought them out of Egypt, and now he is about to do it again. Jacob was God's servant, and therefore he redeemed him; for what had other masters to do with God's servants? Israel is God's son, therefore Pharaoh must let him go. God redeemed Jacob, and therefore it was fit that he should be his servant; (Ps. cxvi. 16.) the bonds God had loosed, tied them the faster to him. He that redeemed us has an unquestionable right to us.

[2.] That those whom God designs to bring home to himself, he will take care of, that they want not for the necessary expenses of their journey. When he brought them out of Egypt, and led them through the deserts, (v. 21.) they thirsted not, (v. 21.) for in all their removes the water out of the rock followed them; thence he caused the waters to flow, and since rock-water is the clearest and finest, God clave the rock, and the waters gushed out; for he can fetch in necessary supplies for his people the way that they think least likely. This refers to what he did for them when he brought them out of Egypt; when all this was literally true. But it should not be in effect done again, in their return out of Babylon, so well provided for shall they and theirs be in their return. God does his work as effectually by marvellous providences as by miracles, though perhaps they be not so much taken notice of. This is applicable to those treasures of grace laid up for us in Jesus Christ, from which all good flows to us as the water did to Israel out of the rock, for that Rock is Christ.

(3.) Here is a caveat put in against the wicked who go on still in their trespasses; Let not them think to have any benefit among God's people, though in show and profession they herd themselves among them; let them not expect to come in sharers; no, (v. 22.) though God's thoughts concerning the body of that people were thoughts of peace, yet to those among them that were wicked, and hated to be reformed, *there is no peace*, no peace with God or their own consciences, no, no real good, whatever is pretended to. What have they to do with peace, who are enemies to God? Their false prophets cried Peace to them to whom it did not belong; but God tells them that there shall be no peace, nor any thing like it, to the wicked. The quarrel sinners have commenced with God, if not taken up in time by repentance, will be an everlasting quarrel.

## CHAP. XLIX.

Glorious things had been spoken in the chapters before, concerning the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon; but lest any should think, when it was accomplished, that it looked much greater and brighter in the prophecy than in the performance, and that the return of about 40,000 Jews in a poor condition out of Babylon to Jerusalem, was not an event sufficiently answering to the height and grandeur of the expressions used in the prophecy, he here comes to show that the prophecy had a further intention, and was to have its full accomplishment in a redemption that should as far outdo these expressions as the other seemed to come short of them; even the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, of whom not only Cyrus, who was God's servant in working the Jews' deliverance, but Isaiah too, who was God's servant in foretelling it, was a type. In this chapter, we have, I. The designation of Christ, under the type of Isaiah, to his office as Mediator, v. 1..3. II. The assurance given him of the success of his undertaking among the Gentiles, v. 3..8. III. The redemption that should be wrought by him, and the progress of that redemption, v. 9..12. IV. The encouragement given hence to the afflicted church, v. 13..17. V. The addition of many to it, and the setting up of a church among the Gentiles, v. 18..23. VI. A ratification of the prophecy of the Jews' release out of Babylon, which was to be the figure and type of all these blessings, v. 24..26. If this chapter be rightly understood, we shall see ourselves to be more concerned in the prophecies relating to the Jews' deliverance out of Babylon than we thought we were.

1. **L**ISTEN, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. 2. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me. 3. And said unto me, Thou art my servant O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. 4. Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain yet surely my judgment is with the Lord and my work with my God. 5. And now saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. 6. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel, I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Here,

I. An auditory is summoned together, and attention demanded. The sermon in the chapter before was directed to the house of Jacob and the people of Israel, v. 1, 12. But this is directed to the isles, the Gentiles, for they are called *the isles of the Gentiles*, (Gen. x. 5.) and to *the people from far*, that were *strangers to the commonwealth of Israel*, and afar off. Let these listen (v. 1.) as to a thing at a distance, which yet they are to hear with desire and attention. Note, 1. The tidings of a Redeemer are sent to the Gentiles, and to those that lay most remote; and they are concerned to listen to them. 2. The Gentiles listened to the gospel, when the Jews were deaf to it.

II. The great Author and Publisher of the re-

demption produces his authority from heaven for the work he had undertaken. 1. God had appointed him, and set him apart for it; *The Lord has called me from the womb to this office, and made mention of my name*, nominated me to be the Saviour: by an angel he called him *Jesus—a Saviour*, who should save his people from their sins, Matth. i. 21. Nay, from the womb of the divine counsels, before all worlds, he was called to this service, and help was laid upon him; and he came at the call, for he said, *Lo, I come*, with an eye to what was written of him in the volume of the book. This was said of some of the prophets, as types of him, Jer. i. 5. Paul was separated to the apostleship from his mother's womb, Gal. i. 15. 2. God had fitted and qualified him for the service to which he designed him; he made his mouth like a sharp sword, and made him like a polished shaft, or a bright arrow; furnished him with every thing necessary to fight God's battles against the powers of darkness, to conquer Satan, and reduce God's revolted subjects to their allegiance, by his word, that is, the *two-edged sword* (Heb. iv. 12.) which comes out of his mouth, Rev. xix. 15. The convictions of the word are the arrows that shall be sharp in the hearts of sinners, Ps. xlv. 5. 3. God had preferred him to the service for which he had reserved him; *He has hid me in the shadow of his hand* and in his quiver, which denotes, (1.) Concealment: the gospel of Christ, and the calling in of the Gentiles by it, were long hidden from ages and generations, hidden in God, (Eph. iii. 5. Rom. xvi. 25.) hidden in the shadow of the ceremonial law, and the Old Testament types. (2.) Protection: the house of David was the particular care of the Divine Providence, because that blessing was in it. Christ in his infancy was sheltered from the rage of Herod. 4. God had owned him; had said unto him, *"Thou art my Servant, whom I have employed, and will cause to succeed; thou art Israel in effect, the Prince with God, that hast wrestled and prevailed; and in thee I will be glorified."* The people of God are *Israel*, and they are all gathered together, and summed up, as it were, in Christ, the great Representative of all Israel, as the High Priest who had the names of all the tribes on his breastplate; and in him God is, and will be, glorified; so he said by a voice from heaven, John xii. 27, 28. Some read the words in two clauses, *Thou art my servant*, (so Christ is, ch. xlii. 1.) *It is Israel in whom I will be glorified by thee*; it is the spiritual Israel, the elect, in the salvation of whom by Jesus Christ God will be glorified, and his free grace for ever admired.

III. He is assured of the good success of his undertaking; for whom God calls, he will prosper. And as to this,

1. He objects the discouragement he had met with at his first setting out; (v. 4.) *"Then I said, with a sad heart, I have laboured in vain; those that were ignorant, and careless, and strangers to God, are so still; I have called and they have refused, I have stretched out my hands to a gainsaying people."* This was Isaiah's complaint, but it was no more than he was bid to expect, ch. vi. 9. The same was a temptation to Jeremiah to resolve he would labour no more, Jer. xx. 9. It is the complaint of many a faithful minister, that has not reaped, but laboured, not spared, but spent, his strength, and himself with it, and yet, as to many, it is all in vain, and for naught, they will not be prevailed with to repent and believe. But here it seems so point at the obstinacy of the Jews, among whom Christ went in person, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, laboured, and spent his strength, and yet the rulers and the body of the nation rejected him and his doctrine; so very few were brought in,

when one would have thought none should have stood out, that he might well say, *"I have laboured in vain, preached so many sermons, wrought so many miracles, in vain."* Let not the ministers think it strange that they are slighted, when the Master himself was.

2. He comforts himself under this discouragement with this consideration, that it was the cause of God in which he was engaged, and the call of God that engaged him in it; *Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord*, who is the Judge of all, and *my work with my God*, whose servant I am. His comfort is, and it may be the comfort of all faithful ministers, when they see little success of their labours, (1.) That, however it be, it is a righteous cause that they are pleading; they are with God, and for God, they are on his side, and workers together with him. They like not their judgment, the rule they go by, nor their work, the business they are employed in, ever the worse for this; the unbelief of men gives them no cause to suspect the truth of their doctrine, Rem. iii. 3. (2.) That their management of this cause, and their prosecution of this work, were known to God, and they could appeal to him concerning their sincerity, and that it was not through any neglect of theirs that they laboured in vain; *"He knows the way that I take; my judgment is with the Lord"*, to determine whether I have not delivered my soul, and left the blood of them that perish on their own heads." (3.) Though the labour be in vain as to those that were laboured with, yet not as to the labourer himself, if he be faithful: his judgment is with the Lord, who will justify him, and bear him out, though men condemn him, and run him down; and his work, the reward of his work, is with his God, who will take care he shall be no loser, no, not by his lost labour. (4.) Though the judgment be not yet brought forth unto victory, nor the work to perfection, yet both are with the Lord, to carry them on, and give them success, according to his purpose, in his own way and time.

3. He receives from God a further answer to this objection, v. 5, 6. He knew very well that God had set him on work, had formed him from the womb to be his servant, had not only called him so early to it, (v. 1.) but begun so early to fit him for it, and dispose him to it. Those whom God designs to employ as his servants, he is fashioning and preparing to be so long before, when perhaps neither themselves nor others are aware of it; it is he that forms the spirit of man within him. Christ was to be his Servant, to bring Jacob again to him, that had treacherously departed from him; the seed of Jacob, therefore, according to the flesh, must first be dealt with, and means used to bring them back, Christ, and the word of salvation by him, are sent to them first, nay, Christ comes in person to them only, to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*. But what if Jacob will not be brought back to God, and Israel will not be gathered? So it proved; but this is a satisfaction in that case.

(1.) Christ will be glorious in the eyes of the Lord; and those are truly glorious, that are so in God's eyes. Though few of the Jewish nation were converted by Christ's preaching and miracles, and many of them loaded him with ignominy and disgrace, yet God put honour upon him, and made him glorious, at his baptism, and in his transfiguration, spake to him from heaven, sent angels to minister to him, made even his shameful death glorious by the many prodigies that attended it, much more his resurrection. In his sufferings, God was his Strength, so that though he met with all the discouragement imaginable, by the contempts of a people whom he had done so much to oblige, yet he did not fail, nor was discouraged. An angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him, Luke xxii. 43. Faithful ministers, though they see not the fruit of

their labours, shall yet be accepted of God, and in that they shall be truly glorious, for his favour is our honour; and they shall be assisted to proceed and persevere in their labours notwithstanding. This weakens their hands, but their God will be their Strength.

(2.) The gospel shall be *glorious in the eyes of the world*; though it be not so in the eyes of the Jews, yet it shall be entertained by the nations, (v. 6.) The Messiah seemed as if he had been primarily designed to *bring Jacob back*, v. 5. But he is here told that it is comparatively but a small matter; a higher orb of honour than that, and a larger sphere of usefulness, are designed him; "*It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my Servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob to the dignity and dominion they expect by the Messiah, and to restore the preserved of Israel, and make them a flourishing church and state as formerly*;" (nay, considering what a little handful of people they are, it would be but a small matter, in comparison, for the Messiah to be the Saviour of them only;) "and therefore, *I will give thee for a Light to the Gentiles*, many great and mighty nations by the gospel of Christ shall be brought to the knowledge and worship of the true God, *that thou mayest be my Salvation*, the Author of that salvation which I have designed for lost man, and this to the end of the earth, to nations at the greatest distance." Hence Simon learned to call Christ a *Light to lighten the Gentiles*; (Luke ii. 32.) and St. Paul's exposition of this text is what we ought to abide by, and it serves for a key to the context, Acts xiii. 47. Therefore, says he, we turn to the Gentiles, to preach the gospel to them, *because so has the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles*. In this, the Redeemer was truly glorious, though Israel was not gathered; the setting up of his kingdom in the Gentile world was more his honour, than if he had raised up all the tribes of Jacob. This promise is in part fulfilled already, and will have a further accomplishment if that time be yet to come, which the apostle speaks of when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. Observe, God calls it his salvation, which some think intimates how well pleased he was with it, how he gloried in it, and (if I may so say) how much his heart was upon it. They further observe, that Christ is given for a Light to all those to whom he is given for salvation. It is in darkness that men perish; Christ enlightens men's eyes, and so makes them holy and happy.

7. Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. 8. Thus saith the LORD, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages: 9. That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves: they shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. 10. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them; for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them,

even by the springs of water shall he guide them. 11. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. 12. Behold, these shall come from far; and, lo, those from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

In these verses, we have,

1. The humiliation and exaltation of the Messiah; (v. 7.) *The Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and Israel's Holy One*, who had always taken care of the Jewish church, and wrought out for them those deliverances that were typical of the great salvation, speaks here to him who was the Undertaker of that salvation. And, 1. He takes notice of his humiliation, the instances of which were uncommon, nay, unparalleled. He was one whom *men despised*; (ch. liii. 3.) he is *despised and rejected of men*. To be despised by so mean a creature, (man, who is himself a worm,) bespeaks the lowest and most contemptible condition imaginable. Man, whom he came to save, and to put honour upon, yet despised him, and put contempt upon him; so wretchedly ungrateful were his persecutors. The ignominy he underwent was not the least of his sufferings: they not only made him despicable, but odious; he was *one whom the nation abhorred*; they treated him as the worst of men, and cried out, *Crucify him, crucify him*. The nation did it, the Gentiles as well as Jews, and the Jews herein worse than Gentiles; for his cross was to the one a *stumbling-block*, and to the other *foolishness*. He was a *servant of rulers*, he was trampled upon, abused, scourged, and crucified as a slave. Pilate boasted of his power over him, John xix. 10. This he submitted to for our salvation. 2. He promises him his exaltation. Honour was done him, even in the depth of his humiliation. Herod the king stood in awe of him, saying, *It is John the Baptist*; noblemen, rulers, centurions, came and kneeled to him; but this was more fully accomplished when kings received his gospel, and submitted to his yoke, and joined in the worship of him, and called themselves the vassals of Christ. Not that Christ values the rich more than the poor, (they stand upon a level with him,) but it is for the honour of his kingdom among men, when the great ones of the earth appear for him, and do homage to him. This shall be the accomplishment of God's promise, that he will give him the heathen for his inheritance, and therefore it shall be done, *because of the Lord, who is faithful* and true to his promise; and it shall be an evidence that Christ had a commission for what he did, and that God had chosen him, and would own the choice he had made.

II. The blessings he has in store for all those to whom he is made salvation.

1. God will own and stand by him in his undertaking; (v. 8.) *In an acceptable time have I heard thee*, that is, I will hear thee. Christ, in the days of his flesh, offered up strong cries, and was heard, Heb. v. 7. He knew that the Father heard him always, (John xi. 42.) heard him for himself, (for though the cup might not pass from him, yet he was enabled to drink it,) heard him for all that are his, and therefore he interceded for them as one having authority, *Father, I will*, John xvii. 24. All our happiness results from the Son's interest in the Father, and the prevalency of his intercession, that he always heard him; and this makes the gospel-time an acceptable time, welcome to us, because we are accepted of God, both reconciled and recommended to him, that God hears the Redeemer for us, Heb. vii. 25. Nor will he hear him only, but help him to go through with his undertaking. The

Father was always with him at his right hand, and did not leave him when his disciples did. Violent attacks were made upon our Lord Jesus by the powers of darkness, when it was their hour to have driven him off from his undertakings, but God promises to preserve him, and enable him to persevere in it; on that *one stone were seven eyes*, *Zech. iii. 9*. God would preserve him, would preserve his interest; his kingdom among men, though fought against on all sides. Christ is preserved while Christianity is.

2. God will authorize him to apply to his church the benefits of the redemption he is to work out. God's preserving and helping him was to make the day of his gospel a day of salvation. And so the apostle understands it; *Behold, now is the day of salvation*, now the word of reconciliation by Christ is preached, *2 Cor. vi. 2*.

(1.) He shall be a Guarantee of the treaty of peace between God and man; I will give thee for a covenant of the people. This we had before, (*ch. xlii. 6.*) and it is here repeated as faithful, and well worthy of all acceptance and observation. He is given for a covenant, for a pledge of all the blessings of the covenant; it was in him that God was reconciling the world to himself, and he that *shared not his own Son*, will deny us nothing. He is given for a Covenant, not only as he is the Mediator of the covenant, the blessed *Days-man who has laid his hand upon us both*, but as he is all in all in the covenant. All the duty of the covenant is summed up in our being his; and all the privilege and happiness of the covenant are summed up in his being ours.

(2.) He shall repair the decays of the church, and build it upon a rock. He shall establish the earth, or rather, the land, the land of Judah, a type of the church; he shall cause the desolate heritages to be inherited; so the cities of Judah were after the return out of captivity, and so the church, which in the last and degenerate ages of the Jewish nation had been as a country laid waste, but was again replenished by the fruits of the preaching of the gospel.

(3.) He shall free the souls of men from the bondage of guilt and corruption, and bring them into the glorious liberty of God's children. He shall say to the prisoners that were bound over to the justice of God, and bound under the power of Satan, *Go forth*, *v. 9*. Pardoning mercy is a release from the curse of the law, and renewing grace is a release from the dominion of sin; both are from Christ, and are branches of the great salvation; it is he that says, *Go forth*; it is the Son that makes us free, and then we are free indeed. He saith to them that are in darkness, *Show yourselves*: "Not only see but be seen, to the glory of God, and your own comfort." When he discharged the lepers from their confinement, he said, *Go show yourselves to the priest*; when we see the light, let our light shine.

(4.) He shall provide for the comfortable passage of those whom he sets at liberty, to the place of their rest and happy settlement, *v. 9.—11*. These verses refer to the provision made for the Jews' return out of their captivity, who were taken under the particular care of the Divine Providence, as favourites of heaven, and now so in a special manner; but it is applicable to that guidance of divine grace, which all God's spiritual Israel are under, from their release out of bondage to their settlement in the heavenly Canaan. [1.] They shall have their charges borne, and shall be fed at free cost with food convenient; *They shall feed on the ways*, as sheep; for now, as formerly, God leads Joseph like a flock. When God pleases, even highway ground shall be good ground for the sheep of his pasture to feed in. Their pastures shall be not only in the val-

leys, but in all high places, which are commonly dry and barren. Wherever God brings his people, he will take care they shall want nothing that is good for them, *Ps. xxxiv. 10*. And so well shall they be provided for, that they shall not hunger nor thirst, for what they need they shall have seasonably, before their need of it comes to any extremity. [2.] They shall be sheltered and protected from every thing that would incommode them; *Neither shall the heat nor sun smite them*, for God causes his flock to rest at noon, *Cant. i. 7*. No evil thing shall befall those that put themselves under a divine protection; they shall be enabled to *bear the burthen and heat of the day*. [3.] They shall be under God's gracious guidance; *He that has mercy on them*, in bringing them out of their captivity, shall lead them, as he did their fathers in the wilderness, by a pillar of cloud and fire; *Even by springs of water*, which will be ready to them in their march, shall he guide them. God will furnish them with suitable and seasonable comforts, not like the pools of rain-water in the valley of Baca, but like the water out of the rock which followed Israel. Those who are under a divine guidance, and follow that closely, while they do so, may, upon good grounds, hope for divine comforts and cordials. The world leads its followers by broken cisterns, or brooks that fail in summer; but God leads those that are his by springs of water. And those whom God guides, shall find a ready road, and all obstacles removed; (*v. 11.*) *I will make all my mountains a way*. He that in times past made the sea a way, now with as much ease will make the mountains a way, though they seemed impassable. The highway, or causeway, shall be raised, to make it both the plainer and the fairer. Note, The ways in which God leads his people, he himself will be the Overseer of, and will take care that they be well mended, and kept in repair, as of old the ways that led to the cities of refuge. The levelling of the roads from Babylon, as it was foretold, (*ch. xl. 2, 3.*) was applied to gospel-works, and so may this be. Though there be difficulties in the way to heaven, which we cannot by our own strength get over, yet the grace of God shall be sufficient to help us over them, and to make even the mountains a way, *ch. xxxv. 8*.

(5.) He shall bring them all together from all parts, that they may return in a body, that they may encourage one another, and be the more taken notice of. They were dispersed into several parts of the country of Babylon, as their enemies pleased to prevent any combination among themselves. But when God's time is come to bring them home together, one spirit shall animate them all that lie at the greatest distance from each other; and those also that had taken shelter in other countries, shall meet them in the land of Judah, *v. 12*. Here shall a party come from far, some from the north, some from the west, some from the land of Sinim, which, probably, is some province of Babylon, not elsewhere named in scripture. But some make it to be a country belonging to one of the chief cities of Egypt, called Sin, of which we read, *Ezek. xxx. 15, 16*. Now this promise was to have a further accomplishment in the great confluence of converts to the gospel-church, and its full accomplishment when God's chosen shall come from the east and from the west, to sit down with the patriarchs in the kingdom of God, *Matth. viii. 11*.

13. Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.  
14. But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my LORD hath forgotten me. 15

Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. 16. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of *my* hands; thy walls *are* continually before me. 17. Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers, and they that made thee waste, shall go forth of thee.

The scope of these verses is to show that the return of the people of God out of their captivity, and the eternal redemption to be wrought out by Christ, (which that was a type of,) would be great occasions of joy to the church, and great proofs of the tender care God has of the church.

I. Nothing can furnish us with better matter for songs of praise and thanksgiving, v. 13. Let the whole creation join with us in songs of joy, for it shares with us in the benefits of the redemption, and all they can contribute to this sacred melody, is little enough in return for such inestimable favours, Ps. xcvi. 11. Let there be joy in heaven, and let the angels of God celebrate the praises of the great Redeemer; let the earth and the mountains, particularly the great ones of the earth, be joyful, and break forth into singing, *for the earnest expectation of the creature that waits for the glorious liberty of the children of God*, (Rom. viii. 19, 21.) shall now be abundantly answered; God's people are the blessings and ornaments of the world, and therefore let there be universal joy, *for God has comforted his people* that were in sorrow, and *he will have mercy upon the afflicted* because of his compassion, upon his afflicted because of his covenant.

II. Nothing can furnish us with more convincing arguments, to prove the most tender and affectionate concern God has for his church, and her interests and comforts.

1. The troubles of the church have given some occasion to question God's care and concern for it, v. 14. Zion, in distress, said, *The Lord has forsaken me*, and looks after me no more; *My Lord has forgotten me*, and will look after me no more. See how deplorable the case of God's people may be sometimes, such that they may seem to be forsaken and forgotten of their God; and at such a time their temptations may be alarmingly violent. Infidels, in their presumption, say, *God has forsaken the earth*, (Ezek. viii. 12.) and *has forgotten their sins*, Ps. x. 11. Weak believers, in their despondency, are ready to say, "God has forsaken his church, and forgotten the sorrows of his people." But we have no more reason to question his promise and grace, than we have to question his providence and justice. He is as sure a Rewarder as he is a Revenger. Away therefore with these distrusts and jealousies which are the bane of friendship.

2. The triumphs of the church, after her troubles, will in due time put the matter out of question. What God will do for Zion, we are told, v. 17. (1.) Her friends, who had deserted her, shall be gathered to her, and shall contribute their utmost to her assistance and comfort; *Thy children shall make haste*. Converts to the faith of Christ are the children of the church; they shall join themselves to her with great readiness and cheerfulness, and flock into the communion of saints, as doves to their windows; *"Thy builders shall make haste;"* (so some read it), "who shall build up thy houses, thy walls, especially thy temple, they shall do it with expedition." Church-work is usually slow work; but when God's time is come, it shall be done suddenly. (2.) Her enemies, who had threatened and assaulted her, shall be forced to withdraw from her;

*Thy destroyers, and they who made thee waste*, who had made themselves masters of the country, and ravaged it, *shall go forth of thee*. By Christ, the prince of this world, the great destroyer, is cast out, is dispossessed, his power broken, and his attempts quite baffled.

Now by this it will appear that Zion's suggestions were altogether groundless, that God has not forsaken her, or forgotten her, nor ever will. Be assured,

[1.] That God has a tender affection for his church and people, v. 15. In answer to Zion's fears, God speaks as one concerned for his own glory; he takes himself to be reflected upon, if Zion say, *The Lord has forsaken me*; and he will clear himself. As one concerned also for his people's comfort, he would not have them droop and be discouraged, and give way to any uneasy thoughts. You think that I have forgotten you; *can a woman forget her sucking child?* First, It is not likely that she should. A woman, whose honour it is to be of the tender sex as well as the fair one, cannot but have compassion for a child, which, being both harmless and helpless, is a proper object of compassion. A mother, especially, cannot but be concerned for her own child, for it is her own, a piece of herself, and very lately one with her. A nursing mother, most of all, cannot but be tender of her sucking child; her own breasts will soon put her in mind of it, if she should forget it. But, Secondly, It is possible that she may forget. A woman may perhaps be so *unhappy* as not to be able to remember her sucking child, she may be sick, and dying, and going to the land of forgetfulness; or, she may be so *unnatural* as not to have compassion on the son of her womb, as those who, to conceal their shame, are the death of their children as soon as they are their life. Lam. iv. 10. Deut. xxviii. 57. But, says God, *I will not forget thee*. Note, God's compassions to his people infinitely exceed those of the tenderest parents toward their children. What are the affections of nature to those of the God of nature!

[2.] That he has a constant care of his church and people; (v. 16.) *I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands*. This does not allude to the foolish art of palmistry, which imagines every man's fate to be engraved in the palms of his hands, and to be legible in the lines there; but to the custom of those who tie a string upon their hands or fingers, to put them in mind of things which they are afraid they shall forget; or to the wearing of signet or locket-rings in remembrance of some dear friend. His setting them thus as a seal upon his arm, denotes his setting them as a seal upon his heart, and his being ever mindful of them and their interest, Cant. viii. 6. If we bind God's law as a sign upon our hand, (Deut. vi. 8.—11, 18.) he will engrave our interests as a sign on his hand, and will look upon that and remember the covenant. He adds, *Thy walls shall be continually before me*; thy ruined walls, though no pleasing spectacle, shall be in my thoughts of compassion. Do Zion's friends *favour her dust*? Ps. cii. 14. So does her God. Or, "The plan and model of thy walls, that are to be rebuilt, is before me, and they shall certainly be built according to it." Or, "Thy walls (thy safety) are my continual care; so are the watchmen on thy walls." Some apply his graving of his church on the palms of his hands to the wounds in Christ's hands when he was crucified; he will look on the marks of them, and remember those for whom he suffered and died.

18. Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith

the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all as with an ornament, and bind them *on thee* as a bride *doeth*. 19. For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. 20. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place for me that I may dwell. 21. Then shalt thou say in thy heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where *had they been?* 22. Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in *their* arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon *their* shoulders. 23. And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers: they shall bow down to thee with *their* face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

Two things are here promised, which were to be in part accomplished in the reviving of the Jewish church, after its return out of captivity, but more fully in the planting of the Christian church, by the preaching of the gospel of Christ; and we may take the comfort of these promises.

1. That the church shall be replenished with great numbers added to it. It was promised, (v. 17.) that *her children should make haste*; that promise is here enlarged upon, and is made very encouraging. It is promised,

1. That multitudes shall flock to the church from all parts. *Look round, and see how they gather themselves to thee*, (v. 18.) by a local accession to the Jewish church. They come to Jerusalem from all the adjacent countries, for that was then the centre of their unity; but, under the gospel, it is by a spiritual accession to the mystical body of Christ in faith and love; those that are *come to Jesus as the Mediator of the new covenant*, thereby *come to the mount Zion, the church of the first-born*, Heb. xii. 22, 23. *Lift up thine eyes, and behold how the fields are white unto the harvest*, John iv. 35. Note, It is matter of joy to the church to see a multitude of converts to Christ.

2. That such as are added to the church shall not be a burthen and blemish to her, but her strength and ornament. This part of the promise is confirmed with an oath, *As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all*. The addition of such numbers to the church shall complete her clothing; and when all that were chosen are effectually called, then the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall have made herself ready, shall be quite dressed, Rev. xix. 7. They shall make her to appear comely and considerable; and she shall therefore bind them on with as much care and complacency as a bride does her ornaments. When those that are added to the church, are serious and holy, and

exemplary in their conversation, they are an ornament to it.

3. That thus the country which was waste and desolate, and *without inhabitant*, (ch. v. 9.—vi. 11.) shall be again peopled, nay, it shall be over-peopled; (v. 19.) "*Thy waste and thy desolate places*, that have long lain so, and the land of thy destruction, that land of thine which was destroyed with thee, and which nobody cared for dwelling in, shall now be so full of people, that there shall be no room for the inhabitants." Here is a blessing poured out till there be not *room enough to receive it*, Mal. iii. 10. Not that they should be crowded by their enemies, or straitened for room, as Abraham and Lot were, because of the Canaanite in the land; "No, they that swallowed thee up, and took possession of thy land when thy possession of it was discontinued, shall be far away. Thy people shall be numerous, and there shall be no stranger, no enemy, among them." Thus the *kingdom of God among men*, which had been impoverished and almost depopulated, partly by the corruptions of the Jewish church, and partly by the abominations of the Gentile world, was again peopled and enriched by the setting up of the Christian church, and by its graces and glories.

4. That the new converts shall strangely increase and multiply. Jerusalem, after she has lost abundance of her children by the sword, famine, and captivity, shall have a new family growing up instead of them; children which she *shall have after she has lost the other*, (v. 20.) as Seth, who was *appointed another seed instead of Abel*, and Job's children, which God blessed him with instead of those that were killed in the ruins of the house. God will repair his church's losses, and secure to himself a seed to serve him in it. It is promised to the Jews, after their return, that *Jerusalem shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets*, Zech. viii. 5. The church, after it has lost the Jews, who will be cut off by their own infidelity, shall have abundance of children still, more than she had when the Jews belonged to her. See Gal. iv. 27. They shall be so numerous, that, (1.) The children shall complain for want of room; they shall say, (and it is a good hearing,) "Our numbers increase so fast, that the place is too strait for us;" as the sons of the prophets complained, 2 Kings vi. 1. But strait as the place is, still more shall desire to be admitted, and the church shall gladly admit them, and the inconvenient straitness of the place shall be no hindrance to either, for it will be found, whatever we think, that even when the *poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind*, are brought in, *yet still there is room*, room enough for those that are in, and room for more, Luke xiv. 21, 22. (2.) The mother shall stand amazed at the increase of her family, v. 21. She shall say, *Who has begotten me these? and Who has brought up these?* They came to her with all the duty, affection, and submission of children; and yet she never bore any pain for them, nor took any pains with them, but has them ready reared to her hand. This gives her a pleasing surprise, and she cannot but be astonished at it, considering what her condition had been very lately, and very long. The Jewish nation had left her children, they were cut off, she had been desolate, without ark, and alt. r. and temple-service, those tokens of God's espousals to them; nay, she had been a captive, and continually removing to and fro, in an unsettled condition, and not likely to bring up children either for God or herself. She was left alone in obscurity; *This is Zion whom no man seeks after*; left in all the solitude and sorrow of a widowed state. How then came she to be thus replenished? See here, [1.] That the church is not perpetually visible, out there are times when it is desolate, and left alone, and



made few in number. [2.] That yet on the other hand its desolations shall not be perpetual, nor will it be found too hard for God to repair them, and out of stones to raise up children unto Abraham. [3.] That sometimes this is done in a very surprising way, as when a nation is born at once, *ch. lxxvi. 8.*

5. That this shall be done with the help of the Gentiles, *v. 22.* The Jews were cast off, among whom it was expected that the church should be built up; but God will *sow it to himself in the earth*, and from thence will reap a plentiful crop, *Hos. ii. 23.* Observe, (1.) How the Gentiles shall be called in; God will *lift up his hand to them*, to invite or beckon them, having all the day stretched it out in vain to the Jews, (*ch. lxxv. 2.*) Or it denotes the exerting of an almighty power, that of his Spirit and grace, to compel them to come in, to make them willing. And he will *set up his standard to them*, the preaching of the everlasting gospel, to which they shall gather, and under which they shall list themselves. (2.) How they shall come; *They shall bring thy sons in their arms.* They shall assist the sons of Zion, which are found among them, in their return to their own country, and shall forward them with as much tenderness as ever any parent carried a child that was weak and helpless. God can raise up friends for returning Israelites, even among Gentiles; *the earth helped the woman*, *Rev. xii. 16.* Or, "When they come themselves, they shall bring their children, and make them thy children;" compare *ch. lx. 4.* "Dost thou ask, *Who has begotten and brought up these?* Know, that they were begotten and brought up among the Gentiles, but they are now brought into thy family." Let all that are concerned about young converts, and young beginners in religion, learn hence to deal very tenderly and carefully with them, as Christ does with the lambs, whom he *gathers with his arms, and carries in his bosom.*

11. That the church shall have a great and prevailing interest in the nations, *v. 23.* 1. Some of the princes of the nations shall become patrons and protectors to the church: *Kings shall be thy nursing fathers*, to carry thy sons in their arms, *v. 22.* As Moses, *Numb. xi. 12.* And because women are the most proper nurses, *their queens shall be thy nursing mothers.* This promise was in part fulfilled to the Jews, after their return out of captivity; divers of the kings of Persia were very tender of their interests, countenanced and encouraged them, as Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes; Esther the queen was a nursing mother to the Jews that remained in their captivity, putting her life in her hand to snatch the child out of the flames. The Christian church, after a long captivity, was happy in some such kings and queens as Constantine and his mother Helena, and afterward Theodosius, and others, who nursed the church with all possible care and tenderness. Whenever the sceptre of government is put into the hands of religious princes, then this promise is fulfilled. The church, in this world, is in an infant state, and it is in the power of princes and magistrates to do it a great deal of service; it is happy when they do so, when their power is a praise to them that do well. 2. Others of them, who stand it out against the church's interests, will be forced to yield, and to repent of their opposition; *They shall bow down to thee, and lick the dust.* The promise to the church of Philadelphia seems to be borrowed from this; (*Rev. iii. 9.*) *I will make them of the synagogue of Satan to come and worship before thy feet.* Or, it may be meant of the willing subjection which kings and kingdoms shall pay to Christ, the church's King, as he manifests himself in the church? (*Ps. lxxii. 11.*) *All kings shall fall down before him.* And by all this it shall be made to appear, (1.) That God is the Lord, the

sovereign Lord of all, against whom there is no standing out, or rising up. (2.) That those who wait for him, in a dependence upon his promise, and a resignation to his will, shall not be made ashamed of their hope; for the vision of peace is for an appointed time, and at the end *it shall speak, and shall not lie.*

24. Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? 25. But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. 26. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

Here is, 1. An objection started against the promise of the Jews' release out of their captivity in Babylon, suggesting that it was a thing not to be expected; for, (*v. 24.*) they were a prey in the hand of the mighty, of such as were then the greatest potentates on earth, and therefore it was not likely they should be rescued by force; yet that was not all, they were lawful captives; by the law of God, having offended, they were justly delivered into captivity; and by the law of nations, being taken in war, they were justly detained in captivity till they should be ransomed or exchanged. Now this is spoken either, (1.) By the enemies, as justifying themselves in their refusal to let them go; they plead both might and right. Proud men think all their own that they can lay their hands on, and their title good if they have but the longest sword. Or, (2.) By their friends; either in a way of distrust, despairing of the deliverance, "For who is able to deal with those that detain us, either by force of arms or a treaty of peace?" Or, in a way of thankfulness, admiring the deliverance, "Who would have thought that ever the prey should be taken from the mighty? Yet it is done." This is applicable to our redemption by Christ; as to Satan, we were a prey in the hand of the mighty, and yet delivered even from him that had the power of death, by him that had the power of life. As to the justice of God, we were lawful captives and yet delivered by a price of inestimable value.

2. This objection answered by an express promise, and a further promise; for God's promises being all yea, and amen, they may well serve to corroborate one another.

(1.) Here is an express promise with a *non-obstante*—*notwithstanding* to the strength of the enemy; (*v. 25.*) "*Even the captives of the mighty, though they are mighty, shall be taken away, and it is to no purpose for them to oppose it; and the prey of the terrible, though they are terrible, shall be delivered; and as they cannot with all their strength outforce, so they cannot with all their impudence outface, the deliverance, and the counsels of God concerning it.*" *The Lord saith thus*, who, having all power in his hands, and all hearts, is able to make his words good.

(2.) Here is a further promise, shewing how, and in what way, God will bring about the deliverance. He will bring judgments upon the oppressors, and so will work salvation for the oppressed; "*I will contend with him that contends with thee*, will plead thy cause against those that justify themselves in

oppressing thee; whoever it be, though but a single person, that contends with thee, he shall know that it is at his peril, and thus *I will save thy children.*" The captives shall be delivered by *leading captivity captive*, sending those into captivity that had held God's people captive, Rev. xiii. 10. Nay, they shall have blood for blood; (v. 26.) "*I will feed them that oppress thee, with their own flesh, and they shall be drunken with their own blood*; the proud Babylonians shall become not only an easy, but an acceptable prey to one another; God will send a dividing spirit among them, and their ruin, which was begun by a foreign invasion, shall be completed by their intestine divisions. They shall bite and devour one another, till they are consumed one of another. They shall greedily and with delight prey upon those that are their own flesh and blood." God can make the oppressors of his church to be their own tormentors, and their own destroyers. The New Testament Babylon, having made herself drunk with the blood of the saints, shall have *blood given her to drink, for she is worthy.* See how cruel men sometimes are to themselves, and to one another; indeed those who are so to others are so to themselves, for God's justice and men's revenge will mete to them what they have measured to others; they not only thirst after blood, but drink it so greedily, that they are drunken with it, and with as much pleasure as if it were sweet wine. If God had not more mercy on sinners than they would have one upon another, were their passions let loose, the world would soon be an Aceldama, nay, a desolation.

And (lastly) see what will be the effect of Babylon's ruin; *All flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour*; God will make it to appear, to the conviction of all the world, that, though Israel seem lost and cast off, they have a Redeemer, and though they are made a prey to the mighty, Jacob has a Mighty One, who is able to deal with all his enemies. God intends, by the deliverances of his church, both to notify, and to magnify, his own name.

## CHAP. L.

In this chapter, I. Those to whom God sends are justly charged with bringing all the troubles they were in upon themselves, by their own wilfulness and obstinacy; it being made to appear that God was able and ready to help them, if they had been fit for deliverance, v. 1. . 3. II. He by whom God sends, produces his commission, (v. 4.) alleges his own readiness to submit to all the services and sufferings he was called to in the execution of it, (v. 5, 6.) and assures himself that God, who sent him, would stand by him, and bear him out against all opposition, v. 7. . 9. III. The message that is sent is, life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse; comfort to desponding saints, and terror to presuming sinners, v. 10, 11. Now all this seems to have a double reference; 1. To the unbelieving Jews in Babylon, who quarrelled with God for his dealings with them; and to the prophet Isaiah, who, though dead long before the captivity, yet, prophesying so plainly and fully of it, saw fit to produce his credentials, to justify what he had said. 2. To the unbelieving Jews in our Saviour's time, whose own fault it was, that they were rejected; Christ having preached much to them, and suffered much from them, and being herein borne up by a divine power. The contents of this chapter, in our Bibles, give this sense of it, very concisely, thus; *Christ shows that the dereliction of the Jews is not to be imputed to him; by his ability to save, by his obedience in that work, and by his confidence in divine assistance.* The prophet concludes with an exhortation to trust in God, and not in ourselves.

I. **THUS** saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?

Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away. 2. Wherefore, when I came, *was there* no man? when I called, *was there* none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea: I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because *there is* no water, and dieth for thirst. 3. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.

Those who have professed to be the people of God, and yet seem to be dealt severely with, are apt to complain of God, and to lay the fault upon him, as if he had been hard with them. But, in answer to their murmurings, we have here,

I. A challenge given them to prove, or produce any evidence, that the quarrel began on God's side, v. 1. They could not say that he had done them any wrong, or had acted arbitrarily. 1. He had been a Husband to them; and husbands were then allowed a power to put away their wives upon any little disgust; if they found not favour in their eyes, they made nothing of giving them a bill of divorce, Deut. xxiv. 1. Matth. xix. 7. But they could not say that God had dealt so with them; it is true, they were now separated from him, and had abode many days without ephod, altar, or sacrifice; but whose fault was that? They could not say that God had given their mother a bill of divorce; let them produce it if they can, for a bill of divorce was given into the hand of her that was divorced. 2. He had been a Father to them; and fathers had then a power to sell their children for slaves to their creditors, in satisfaction for the debts they were not otherwise able to pay; it is true, the Jews were sold to the Babylonians then, and afterward to the Romans; but did God sell them for payment of his debts? No, he was not indebted to any of those to whom they were sold, or, if he had sold them, he *did not increase his wealth by their price*, Ps. xlv. 12. When God chastens his children, it is neither for his pleasure, (Heb. xii. 10.) nor for his profit; all that are saved, are saved by a prerogative of grace, but those that perish, are cut off by an act of divine holiness and justice, not of absolute sovereignty.

II. A charge exhibited against them, showing them that they were themselves the authors of their own ruin; "*Behold, for your iniquities, for the pleasure of them, and the gratification of your own base lusts, you have sold yourselves, for your iniquities you are sold*; not as children are sold by their parents, to pay their debts, but as malefactors are sold by the judges, to punish them for their crimes. You sold yourselves to work wickedness, and therefore God justly sold you into the hands of your enemies, 2 Chron. xii. 5, 8. It is for your transgressions that your mother is put away, for her whoredoms and adulteries; which were always allowed to be a just cause of divorce. The Jews were sent into Babylon for their idolatry, a sin which broke the marriage-covenant, and were at last rejected for crucifying the Lord of glory; these were the iniquities for which they were sold and put away.

III. The confirmation of this challenge and this charge.

1. It is plain that it was their own fault that they were cast off; for God came, and offered them his favour, offered them his helping hand, either to prevent their trouble, or to deliver them out of it, but they slighted him and all the tenders of his

grace; "Do you lay it upon me?" (says God,) "Tell me then, wherefore *when I came, there was no man to meet me, when I called, there was none to answer me,*" v. 2. God came to them by his servants the prophets, demanding the fruits of his vineyard; (Matth. xxi. 34.) he sent them his messengers, *rising up betimes, and sending them;* (Jer. xxxv. 15.) he called to them to leave their sins, and so prevent their own ruin: but there was no man, or next to none, that had any regard to the warnings which the prophets gave them, none that answered the calls of God, or complied with the messages he sent them; and this was it for which they were sold and put away; because they *mocked the messengers of the Lord, therefore God brought upon them the king of the Chaldees,* 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16, 17. Last of all, *he sent unto them his Son, he came to his own, but his own received him not;* he called them to himself, but there were none that answered; he would have gathered Jerusalem's children together, but they would not, they knew not, because they would not know, the things that belonged to their peace, nor the day of their visitation, and for that transgression it was that they were put away, and their house left desolate, Matth. xxi. 41.—xxiii. 37, 38. Luke xix. 41, 42. When God calls men to happiness, and they will not answer, they are justly left to be miserable.

2. It is plain that it was not owing to a want of power in God, for he is almighty, and could have recovered them from so great a death, nor was it owing to a want of power in Christ, for he is able to save to the uttermost. The unbelieving Jews in Babylon thought they were not delivered because their God was not able to do it; and those in Christ's time were ready to ask, in scorn, *Can this man save us? For himself he cannot save.* "But," (says God) "*is my hand shortened at all, or is it weakened?*" Can any limits be set to Omnipotence? Cannot he redeem, who is the great Redeemer? Can he no power to deliver, whose all power is? To put to silence, and to put for ever to shame, their doubts concerning his power, he here gives unquestionable proofs of it. (1.) He can, when he pleases, dry up the seas, and make the rivers a wilderness; he did so for Israel when he redeemed them out of Egypt, he can do so again for their redemption out of Babylon. It is done at his rebuke, as easily as with a word's speaking; he can so dry up the rivers, as to leave the fish to die for want of water, and to putrefy. When God *turned the waters of Egypt into blood, he slew the fish,* Ps. cv. 29. The expression our Saviour sometimes used concerning the power of faith, that it *will remove mountains, and plant sycamores in the sea,* is not unlike this; if their faith could do that, no doubt, their faith would save them, and therefore they were inexcusable if they perished in their unbelief. (2.) He can, when he pleases, eclipse the lights of heaven, clothe them with blackness, and make sackcloth their covering, by thick and dark clouds interposing, which he balances, Job xxxvi. 32.—xxxvii. 16.

4. The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to *him that is weary*; he wakeneth morning by morning; he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. 5. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. 6. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. 7. For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded:

therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. 8. *He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me.* 9. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

Our Lord Jesus, having proved himself able to save, here shows himself as willing as he is able. We suppose the prophet Isaiah to say something of himself in these verses, engaging and encouraging himself to go on in his work, as a prophet, notwithstanding the many hardships he met with, not doubting but that God would stand by him, and strengthen him; but, like David, he speaks of himself as a type of Christ, who is here prophesied of, and promised to be the Saviour.

1. As an acceptable Preacher, v. 4. Isaiah, as a prophet, was qualified for the work to which he was called, so were the rest of God's prophets, and others whom he employed as his messengers; but Christ was anointed with the Spirit above his fellows. To make the man of God perfect, he has, 1. The tongue of the learned, to know how to give instruction, how to *speak a word in season to him that is weary.* God, who made man's mouth, gave Moses the tongue of the learned, to speak for the terror and conviction of Pharaoh, Exod. iv. 11, 12. He gave to Christ the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season for the comfort of those that are weary and heavy laden under the burthen of sin, Matth. xi. 28. *Grace was poured into his lips,* and they are said to *drop sweet-smelling myrrh.* See what is the best learning of a minister, to know how to comfort troubled consciences, and to speak pertinently, properly, and plainly, to the various cases of poor souls. An ability to do this is God's gift, and it is one of the best gifts, which we should covet earnestly. Let us repose ourselves in the many comfortable words which Christ has spoken to the weary. 2. The ear of the learned, to receive instruction. Prophets have as much need of this, as of the tongue of the learned; for they must deliver what they are taught, and no other; must hear the word from God's mouth diligently and attentively, that they may speak it exactly, Ezek. iii. 17. Christ himself received, that he might give. None must undertake to be teachers, who have not first been learners; Christ's apostles were first disciples; *scribes instructed unto the kingdom of heaven,* Matth. xiii. 52. Nor is it enough to hear, but we must hear as the learned, hear and understand, hear and remember, hear as those that would learn by what we hear. Those that would hear as the learned, must be awake, and wakeful, for we are naturally drowsy and sleepy, and unapt to hear at all, or we hear by the halves, hear, and do not heed. Our ears need to be wakened; we need to have something said to rouse us, to awaken us out of our spiritual slumbers, that we may hear as for our lives. We need to be wakened morning by morning, as duly as the day returns, to be awakened to do the work of the day in its day. Our case calls for continual fresh supplies of divine grace, to free us from the dulness we contract daily. The morning, when our spirits are most lively, is a proper time for communion with God; then we are in the best frame both to speak to him, *My voice shalt thou hear in the morning,* and to hear from him, the people came *early in the morning* to hear Christ in the temple, Luke xxi. 38. For, it seems, his were morning lectures, and it is God that wakens us morning by morning; if we do

any thing to purpose in his service, it is he, who, as our Master, calls us up; we should doze perpetually, if he did not waken us morning by morning.

II. As a patient Sufferer, v. 5, 6. One would think that he who was commissioned and qualified to speak comfort to the weary, should meet with no difficulty in his work, but universal acceptance; it is, however, quite otherwise; he hath both hard work to do, and hard usage to undergo; and here he tells us with what undaunted constancy he went through with it. We have no reason to question but that the prophet Isaiah went on resolutely in the work to which God had called him, though we read not of his undergoing any such hardships as are here supposed; but we are sure it was abundantly verified in Jesus Christ: and here we have,

1. His patient obedience in his doing-work. "The Lord God has not only wakened my ear to hear what he says, but has opened my ear to receive it, and comply with it; (Ps. xl. 6, 7.) *Mine ear has thou opened; then said I, Lo, I come;*" for when he adds, *I was not rebellious, neither turned away back*, more is implied than expressed—that he was willing, that, though he foresaw a great deal of difficulty and discouragement, though he was to take pains, and give constant attendance as a Servant, though he was to empty himself of that which was very great, and humble himself to that which was very mean, yet he did not fly off, did not fail, nor was discouraged. He continued very free and forward to his work, even when he came to the hardest part of it. Note, As a good understanding in the truths of God, so a good will to the work and service of God is from the grace of God.

.. His obedient patience in his suffering-work. I call it *obedient patience*, because he was patient with an eye to his Father's will; thus pleading with himself, *This commandment have I received of my Father; and thus submitting to God, Not as I will, but as thou wilt*. In this submission, he resigned himself, (1.) To be scourged; *I gave my back to the smiters*; and that not only by submitting to it when he was smitten, but by permitting it (or admitting it rather) among the other instances of pain and shame which he would voluntarily undergo for us. (2.) To be buffeted; *I gave my cheeks to them that not only smote them, but plucked off the hair of the beard*, which was a greater degree both of pain and ignominy. (3.) To be spit upon; *I hid not my face from shame and spitting*. He could have hid his face from it, could have avoided it, but he would not, because he was made a Reproach of men, and thus he would answer to the proselyte, Job, that man of sorrows, of whom it is said, that they *smote him on the cheek reproachfully*, (Job xvii. 10.) and *shared not to spit in his face*, (Job xxx. 10.) an expression not only of contempt, but of abhorrence and indignation. All this Christ underwent for us, and voluntarily, to convince us of his willingness to save us.

III. As a courageous champion, v. 7.—9. The Redeemer is as famous for his boldness as for his humility and patience, and, though he yields, yet he is more than a conqueror.

Observe, 1. The dependence he has upon God. What was the prophet Isaiah's support, was the support of Christ himself; (v. 7.) *The Lord God will help me*; and again, v. 9. Whom God employs we will assist, and will take care they want not any help that they or their work call for. God, having aid help upon his Son for us, gave help to him, and his hand was all along with the Man of his right hand. Nor will he only assist him in his work, but accept of him; (v. 8.) *He is near that justifieth me*. Truly, no doubt, was falsely accused, and loaded with reproach and calumny, as other prophets were; but he despised it, knowing that God would roll

away the reproach, and bring forth his righteousness as the light, perhaps in this world, (Ps. xxxvii. 6.) at furthest in the great day, when there will be a resurrection of names as well as bodies, and the righteous shall shine forth as the morning sun. And so it was verified in Christ; by his resurrection he was proved to be not the man that he was represented, not a blasphemer, not a deceiver, not an enemy to Caesar. The judge that condemned him, owned he found no fault in him; the centurion, or sheriff, that had charge of his execution, declared him a righteous man: so near was he that justified him. But it was true of him in a further and more peculiar sense; the Father justified him, when he accepted the satisfaction he made for the sin of man, and constituted him *the Lord our Righteousness*, who was made sin for us: he was *justified in the Spirit*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. He was near who did it; for his resurrection, by which he was justified, soon followed his condemnation and crucifixion; he was straightway glorified, John xiii. 32.

2. The confidence he thereupon has of success in his undertaking; "If God will help me, if he will justify me, will stand by me, and bear me out, *I shall not be confounded*, as these are that come short of the end they aimed at, and the satisfaction they promised themselves; *I know that I shall not be ashamed*." Though his enemies did all they could to put him to shame, yet he kept his ground, he kept his countenance, and was not ashamed of the work he had undertaken. Note, Work for God is work that we should not be ashamed of; and hope in God is hope that we shall not be ashamed of. Those that trust in God for help shall not be disappointed; they know whom they have trusted, and therefore know they shall not be ashamed.

3. The defiance which, in this confidence, he bids to all opposers and opposition; "God will help me, and therefore have *I set my face like a flint*." The prophet did so, he was bold in reproving sin, in warning sinners, (Ezek. iii. 8, 9.) and in asserting the truth of his predictions. Christ did so; he went on in his work, as Mediator, with unshaken constancy, and undaunted resolution; he did not fail, nor was discouraged; and here he challenges all his opposers, (1.) To enter the lists with him; *Who will contend with me*, either in law, or by the sword? *Let us stand together as combatants, or as the plaintiff and defendant. Who is mine adversary? Who is the master of my cause?* so the word is. "Who will pretend to enter an action against me? Let him appear, and come near to me, for I will not abscond." Many offered to dispute with Christ, but he put them to silence. The prophet speaks this in the name of all faithful ministers; those who keep close to the pure word of God, in delivering their message, need not fear contradiction; the scriptures will bear them out, whoever contends with them. *Great is the truth, and will prevail*. Christ speaks this in the name of all believers, speaks it as their Champion. Who dares be an enemy to those whom he is a Friend to, or contend with those for whom he is an Advocate? Thus St. Paul applies it, (Rom. viii. 33.) *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* (2.) He challenges them to prove any crime upon him; (v. 9.) *Who is he that shall condemn me?* The prophet, perhaps, was condemned to die; Christ, we are sure, was; and yet both could say, *Who is he that shall condemn?* For there is no condemnation to them whom God justifies. There were those that did condemn them, but what came of them? *They all shall wax old as a garment*. The righteous cause of Christ and his prophets shall outlive all opposition. *The moth shall eat them up silently and insensibly; a little thing will serve to destroy them*. But the roaring lion himself shall not prevail against God's witnesses. All believers

are enoioed to make this challenge, *Who is he that shall condemn? It is Christ that died.*

10. Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light! let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God. 11. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of my hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.

The prophet, having the tongue of the learned given him, that he might give to every one their portion, here makes use of it, rightly dividing the word of truth. It is the summary of the gospel; *he that believes shall be saved*, he that trusts in the name of the Lord shall be comforted, though for awhile he walk in darkness, and have no light. But *he that believes not shall be damned*; though for awhile he walk in the light of his own fire, yet he shall lie down in sorrow.

I. Comfort is here spoken to disconsolate saints, and they are encouraged to trust in God's grace, v. 10. Where observe,

1. What is always the character of a child of God; he is one that fears the Lord with a filial fear, that stands in awe of his majesty, and is afraid of incurring his displeasure. This is a grace that usually appears most in good people then when they walk in darkness, when other graces appear not. They then tremble at his word; (*ch. lxvi. 2.*) and are afraid of his judgments, Ps. cxix. 120. He is one that obeys the voice of God's servant; is willing to be ruled by the Lord Jesus, as God's servant in the great work of man's redemption; one that yields a sincere obedience to the law of Christ, and cheerfully comes up to the terms of his covenant. Those that truly fear God will obey the voice of Christ.

2. What is sometimes the case of a child of God. It is supposed, that though he has in his heart the fear of God, and faith in Christ, yet for a time he walks in darkness, and has no light, is disquieted, and has little or no comfort. Who is there that does so? This intimates that it is a case which sometimes happens among the professors of religion, yet not very often; but whenever it happens, God takes notice of it. It is no new thing for the children and heirs of light sometimes to walk in darkness, and for a time not to have any glimpse or gleam of light. This is not meant so much of the comforts of this life, (those that fear God, when they have ever so great an abundance of them, do not walk in them as their light,) as of their spiritual comforts, which relate to their souls. They walk in darkness, when their evidences for heaven are clouded, their joy in God is interrupted, the testimony of the Spirit is suspended, and the light of God's countenance is eclipsed. Pensive Christians are apt to be melancholy, and those who fear always, to fear too much.

3. What is likely to be an effectual cure in this sad case. He that is thus in the dark, (1.) Let him trust in the name of the Lord, in the goodness of his nature, and that which he has made known of himself, his wisdom, power, and goodness. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, let him run into that. Let him depend upon it, that if he walk before God, which a man may do though he walk in the dark, he shall find God all-sufficient to him. (2.) Let him stay himself upon his God, his in covenant; let him keep hold of his covenant-relation to God, and call God his God, as Christ on the cross, *My God, My God*. Let him stay himself upon the promises of

the covenant, and build his hopes on them. When a child of God is ready to sink, he will find enough in God to stay himself upon. Let him trust in Christ, for God's name is in him; (*Exod. xxiii. 21.*) trust in that name of his, *The Lord our Righteousness*, and stay himself upon God as his God, in and through a Mediator.

II. Conviction is here spoken to presuming sinners, and they are warned not to trust in themselves, v. 11. Observe, 1. The description given of them; They kindle a fire, and walk in the light of that fire; they depend upon their own righteousness, offer all their sacrifices, and burn all their incense, with that fire, (as Nadab and Abihu,) and not with the fire from heaven; in their hope of acceptance with God, they have no regard to the righteousness of Christ, they refresh and please themselves with a conceit of their own merit and sufficiency, and warm themselves with that; it is both light and heat to them. They compass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling. As they trust in their own righteousness, and not in the righteousness of Christ, so they place their happiness in their worldly possessions and enjoyments, and not in the favour of God. Creature-comforts are as sparks, short-lived, and soon gone; yet the children of this world, while they last, warm themselves by them, and walk with pride and pleasure in the light of them. 2. The doom passed upon them; they are ironically bid to walk in the light of their own fire; "Make your best of it, while it lasts. This shall ye have of mine hand, (says Christ, for to him the judgment is committed,) ye shall lie down in sorrow, shall go to bed in the dark." See Job xviii. 5, 6. *His candle shall be put out with him.* Those that make the world their comfort, and their own righteousness their confidence, will certainly meet with a fatal disappointment, which will be bitterness in the end. A godly man's way may be melancholy, but his end shall be peace and everlasting light. A wicked man's way may be pleasant, but his end and endless abode will be utter darkness.

## CHAP. LI.

This chapter is designed for the comfort and encouragement of those that fear God and keep his commandments, even then when they walk in darkness, and have no light: whether it was intended primarily for the support of the captives in Babylon, is not certain, probably it was, but comforts thus generally expressed ought not to be so confined. Whenever the church of God is in distress, her friends and well-wishers may comfort themselves and one another, with these words; I. That God, who raised his church at first out of nothing, will take care that it shall not perish, v. 1. 3. II. That the righteousness and salvation he designs for his church are sure and near, very near and very sure, v. 4. 6. III. That the persecutors of the church are weak and dying creatures, v. 7, 8. IV. That the same power which did wonders for the church formerly, is now engaged and employed for her protection and deliverance, v. 9. 11. V. That God himself, the Maker of the world, had undertaken both to deliver his people out of their distress, and to comfort them under it, and sent his prophet to assure them of it, v. 12. 16. VI. That, deplorable as the condition of the church now was, (v. 17. 20.) to the same woful circumstances her persecutors and oppressors should shortly be reduced, and worse, v. 20. 23. The three first paragraphs of this chapter begin with, *Hearken unto me*, and they are God's people that are all along called to hearken; for even when comforts are spoken to them, sometimes they *hearken not, through anguish of spirit*, (*Exod. vi. 9.*) therefore they are again and again called to hearken, v. 1, 4, 7. The two other paragraphs of this chapter begin with, *Awake, awake*; in the former, (v. 9.) God's people call upon him to awake, and help them; in the latter, (v. 17.) God calls upon them to awake, and help themselves.

1. **H**EARKEN to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the

LORD: look unto the rock *whence* ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit, *whence* ye are digged. 2. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah *that* bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. 3. For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Observe, 1. How the people of God are here described, to whom the word of this consolation is sent, and who are called upon to hearken to it, *v. 1.* They are such as *follow after righteousness*, as are very desirous and solicitous both to be justified and to be sanctified, are pressing hard after this, to have the favour of God restored to them, and the image of God renewed on them. These are they that seek the Lord, for it is only in the way of righteousness that we can seek him with any hope of finding him.

I. How they are here directed to look back to their original, and the smallness of their beginning; "*Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn;*" (the idolatrous family in Ur of the Chaldees, out of which Abraham was taken, the generation of slaves which the heads and fathers of their tribes were in Egypt); "*look unto the hole of the pit out of which ye are digged,* as clay, when God formed you into a people." Note, It is good for those that are privileged by a new birth, to consider what they were by their first birth: how they were *conceived in iniquity and shapen in sin*. That which is *born of the flesh, is flesh*: how hard was that rock out of which we were hewn, unapt to receive impressions; and how miserable *the hole of that pit out of which we were digged!* The consideration should fill us with low thoughts of ourselves, and high thoughts of divine grace. Those that are now advanced, would do well to remember how low they began; (*v. 2.*) "*Look unto Abraham your father,* the father of all the faithful, of all that follow after the righteousness of faith as he did; (Rom. iv. 11.) *and unto Sarah that bare you,* and whose daughters you all are as long as you do well; think how Abraham was called alone, and yet was blessed and multiplied; and let that encourage you to depend upon the promise of God, even then when a sentence of death seems to be upon all the means that lead to the performance of it. Particularly let it encourage the captives in Babylon, though they are reduced to a small number, and few of them left, to hope that yet they shall increase so as to replenish their own land again. When Jacob is very small, yet he is not so small as Abraham was, who yet became father of many nations. "*Look unto Abraham,* and see what he got by trusting in the promise of God, and take example by him to follow God with an implicit faith."

3. How they are here assured that their present seedness of tears should at length end in a harvest of joys, *v. 3.* The church of God on earth, even the gospel-Zion, has sometimes had her deserts and waste places; many parts of the church, through either corruption or persecution, made like a wilderness, unfruitful to God, or uncomfortable to the inhabitants; but God will find out a time and way to comfort Zion, not only by speaking comfortably to her, but by acting graciously for her. God has comforts in store even for the waste places of his church, for those parts of it that seem not regarded or valued. (1.) He will make them fruitful, and so give them cause to rejoice; her wildernesses shall put on a

new face, and look pleasant as Eden, and abound in all good fruits as the garden of the Lord. Note, It is the greatest comfort of the church to be made serviceable to the glory of God, and to be as his garden in which he delights. (2.) He will make them cheerful, and so give them hearts to rejoice: with the *fruits of righteousness, joy and gladness shall be found therein*; for, the more holiness men have, and the more good they do, the more gladness they have. And where there is gladness, to their satisfaction, it is fit that there should be thanksgiving, to God's honour; for, whatever is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving; and the returns of God's favour ought to be celebrated with the voice of melody, which will be the more melodious, when God gives songs in the night, songs in the desert.

4. Hearken unto me, my people, and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people. 5. My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people: the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust. 6. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. 7. Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. 8. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

Both these *proclamations*, as I may call them, end alike with an assurance of the perpetuity of God's righteousness, and his salvation; and therefore we put them together, both being designed for the comfort of God's people. Observe,

I. Who they are to whom this comfort belong; "My people, and my nation, that I have set apart for myself, that own me, and are owned by me." Those are God's people and his nation, who are subject to him as their King and their God, pay allegiance to him, and put themselves under his protection accordingly. They are a people who know righteousness, who not only have the means of knowledge, and to whom righteousness is made known, but who improve those means, and are able to form a right judgment of truth and falsehood, good and evil. And as they have good heads, so they have good hearts, for they have the law of God in them, written and ruling there. Those God owns for his people, in whose heart his law is. Even those who know righteousness, and have the *law of God in their heart*, may yet be in great distress and sorrow, and loaded with reproach and contempt; but their God will comfort them with the righteousness they know, and the law they have in their hearts.

II. What the comfort is, that belongs to God's people:

1. That the gospel of Christ shall be preached



and published to the world; *A law shall proceed from me*, an evangelical law, the law of Christ, the law of faith, *ch. ii. 3.* This law is his judgment, for it is that law of liberty by which the world shall be governed and judged; this shall not only go forth, but shall continue and rest, it shall take firm footing and deep root in the world; it shall rest not only for the benefit of the Jews, who had the first notice of it, but for a light of the people of other nations. It is this law, this judgment, that we are required to hearken and give ear to, at our peril; for how shall we escape if we neglect it, and turn a deaf ear to it? When a law proceeds from God, *he that has ears to hear, let him hear.*

2. That this law and judgment shall bring with them righteousness and salvation, shall open a ready way to the children of men, that they may be justified and saved, *v. 5.* It is called *God's righteousness* and *his salvation*, because of his contriving and bringing it about; it is a righteousness which he will accept for us, and accept us for; and a righteousness which he will work in us, and graciously accept of; it is the *salvation of the Lord*, for it arises from him, and terminates in him. Observe, There is no salvation without righteousness; and wherever there is the *righteousness of God*, there shall be his salvation. All those, and those only, that are justified and sanctified, shall be glorified.

3. That this righteousness and salvation shall very shortly appear: it is near, it is gone forth; the decree is gone forth concerning it, it shall as certainly be introduced as if it were gone forth already, and the time for it is at hand. It is near in time, behold, all things are now ready; it is near in place, not far to seek, but the word is nigh us, and Christ in the word, righteousness in the word, *Rom. x. 8.*

4. That this evangelical righteousness and salvation shall not be confined to the Jewish nation, but shall be extended to the Gentiles; *Mine arms shall judge the people.* Those that will not yield to the judgments of God's mouth, shall be crushed by the judgments of his hand. Some shall thus be judged by the gospel, *for judgment Christ came into this world*; but others, and those of the isles, shall wait upon him, and hid his gospel, and the commands as well as the comforts of it, welcome. It was a comfort to God's people, to his nation, that multitudes should be added to them, and the increase of their number should be the increase of their strength and beauty. It is added, *And on mine arm shall they trust, that arm of the Lord*, which is revealed in Christ, *ch. liii. 1.* Observe, God's arm shall judge the people that are impenitent, and yet on his arm shall others trust, and be saved by it; for it is to us, as we make it, a savour of life or of death.

5. That this righteousness and salvation shall be for ever, and shall never be abolished, *v. 8.* It is an everlasting righteousness that the Messiah brings in, (*Dan. ix. 24.*) an eternal redemption that he is the Author of, *Heb. v. 9.* As it shall spread through all the nations of the earth, so it shall last through all the ages of the world. We must never expect any other way of salvation, any other covenant of peace, or rule of righteousness, than what we have in the gospel, and what we have there shall continue to the end, *Matth. xxviii. 20.* It is for ever, for the consequences of it shall be to eternity; and by this law of liberty men's everlasting state will be determined. This perpetuity of the gospel, and the blessed things it brings in, is illustrated by the fading and perishing of this world and all things in it. Look up to the visible heavens above, which have continued hitherto, and seem likely to continue, but they shall vanish like smoke that soon spends itself and disappears; they shall be rolled like a scroll, and their lights shall fall like leaves in autumn. Look down to the earth beneath, that abides too for a

short ever, (*Ecc. i. 2.*), but it shall wax old like a garment that will be the worse for wearing; and they that dwell therein, all the inhabitants of the earth, even those that seem to have the best settlement in it, shall die in like manner; the soul shall, as to this world, vanish like smoke, and the body be thrown by like a garment waxen old; they shall be easily crushed, (*Job iv. 19.*) and no loss of them. But when *heaven and earth pass away*, when all flesh and the glory of it wither as grass, *the word of the Lord endures for ever, and not one iota or tittle of that shall fall to the ground.* Those whose happiness is bound up in Christ's righteousness and salvation, will have the comfort of it when time and days shall be no more.

III. What use they are to make of this comfort: if God's righteousness and salvation are near to them, then let them not fear the reproach of men, of mortal, miserable men, nor be afraid of their revilings or spiteful taunts, theirs who bid you sing them the songs of Zion, or who ask you, in scorn, *Where is now your God?* Let not those who embrace the gospel-righteousness be afraid of those who will call them *Beelzebub*, and will say all manner of evil against them falsely; let them not be afraid of them, let them not be disturbed by these opprobrious speeches, nor made uneasy by them, as if they would be the ruin of their reputation and honour, and they must for ever lie under the load of them. Let them not be afraid of their executing their menaces, or be deterred thereby from their duty, or frightened into any sinful compliances, or driven to take any indirect courses for their own safety. Those can bear but little for Christ, that cannot bear a hard word for him. Let us not fear the reproach of men; for, 1. They will be quickly silenced; (*v. 8.*) *The moth shall eat them up like a garment, ch. 1. 9. The worm shall eat them like wool*, or woollen cloth. If we have the approbation of a living God, we may despise the censure of dying men; the matter is not great what *they* say of us, who must shortly be food for worms. Or it intimates the judgments of God with which they shall be visited, with which they shall be consumed, for their malice against the people of God; they shall be slowly and silently, but effectually, destroyed, when God shall come to reckon with them *for all their hard speeches*, *Jude 14, 15.* 2. The cause we suffer for cannot be run down; the falsehood of their reproaches will be detected, but truth shall triumph, and the righteousness of religion's injured cause shall be for ever plain. Clouds darken the sun, but give no obstruction to his progress.

9. Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. *Art* thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? 10. *Art* thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? 11. Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. 12. *I, even I, am* he that comforteth you: who *art* thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; 13. And forgettest the LORD thy Maker, that hath stretched forth

the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor? 14. The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. 15. But *I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: the LORD of hosts is his name.* 16. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, *Thou art my people.*

In these verses, we have,

I. A prayer that God would, in his providence, appear and act for the deliverance of his people, and the mortification of his and their enemies; *Awake, awake, put on strength, O Arm of the Lord, v. 9.* The arm of the Lord is Christ, or it is put for God himself, as Ps. xlv. 23. *Awake, why sleepest thou?* He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; but when we pray that he would awake, we mean that he would make it to appear that he watches over his people, and is always awake to do them good. The arm of the Lord is said to awake, when the power of God exerts itself with more than ordinary vigour on his people's behalf. When a hand or arm is benumbed, we say, It is asleep; when it is stretched forth for action, It awakes. God needs not to be reminded or excited by us, but he gives us leave thus to be humbly earnest with him for such appearances of his power as will be for his own praise; "Put on strength, put forth strength: appear in thy strength, as we appear in the clothes we put on," Ps. xxi. 13. The church sees her case bad, her enemies many and mighty, her friends few and feeble; and therefore she depends purely upon the strength of God's arm for her relief; "*Awake as in the ancient days, do for us now as thou didst for our fathers formerly, repeat the wonders they told us of,*" Judg. vi. 15.

II. The pleas to enforce this prayer; 1. They plead precedents, the experiences of their ancestors, and the great things God had done for them; "Let the arm of the Lord be made bare on our behalf, for it has done great things formerly in defence of the same cause, and we are sure it is neither shortened nor weakened: it did wonders against the Egyptians, who enslaved and oppressed God's son, his first-born; it cut Rahab to pieces with one direful plague after another; and wounded Pharaoh, the Dragon, the Leviathan, (as he is called, Ps. lxxiv. 13, 14.) it gave him his death's wound. It did wonders for Israel; *it dried up the sea, even the waters of the great deep, as far as was requisite to open a way through the sea for the ransomed to pass over,*" v. 10. God is never at a loss for a way to accomplish his purposes concerning his people, but will either find one, or make one. Past experiences, as they are great supports to faith and hope, so they are good pleas in prayer, *Thou hast; wilt thou not?* Ps. lxxxv. 1.—6. 2. They plead promises; (v. 11.) *And the redeemed of the Lord shall return;* (as it may be supplied) *Thou hast said, They shall;* referring to ch. xxxv. 10. where we find this promise, *that the redeemed of the Lord, when they are released out of their captivity in Babylon, shall come with singing unto Zion.* Sinners, when they are brought out of the slavery of sin into the glorious liberty of God's children, may come singing, as a bird got loose out

of the cage. The souls of believers, when they are delivered out of the prison of the body, come to the heavenly Zion with singing. Then this promise will have its full accomplishment, and we may plead it in the mean time; he that designs such joy for us at last, will he not work such deliverance for us in the mean time as our ease requires? When the saints come to heaven, they enter into the joy of their Lord, it crowns their heads with immortal honour, it fills their hearts with complete satisfaction; they shall obtain that joy and gladness which they could never obtain in this vale of tears. In this world of changes, it is a short step from joy to sorrow, but in that world sorrow and mourning shall flee away, never to return, or come in view again.

III. The answer immediately given to this prayer; (v. 12.) *I, even I, am he that comforts you.* They prayed for the operations of his power, he answers them with the consolations of his grace, which may well be accepted as an equivalent. If God do not wound the dragon, and dry the sea, as formerly, yet if he comfort us in soul under our afflictions, we have no reason to complain. If God do not answer immediately, *with the saving strength of his right hand,* we must be thankful if he answer us, as an angel himself was answered, (Zech. i. 13.) *with good words and comfortable words.* See how God resolves to comfort his people; *I, even I, will do it.* He had ordered his ministers to do it, (ch. xl. 1.) but because they cannot reach the heart, he takes the work into his own hands; *I, even I, will do it.* See how he glories in it; he takes it among the titles of his honour to be *the God that comforts them that are cast down;* he delights in being so. Those whom God comforts, are comforted indeed; nay, his undertaking to comfort them is comfort enough to them.

1. He comforts those that were in fear; and fear has torment which calls for comfort; the fear of man has a snare in it which we have need of comfort to preserve us from. He comforts the timorous by chiding them, and that is no improper way of comforting either others or ourselves; *Why art thou cast down, and why disquieted?* v. 12, 13. God, who comforts his people, would not have them disquiet themselves with amazing, perplexing fears, either of the reproach of men, (v. 7.) or of their growing, threatening power and greatness, or of any mischief they may intend against us or our people. Observe,

(1.) The absurdity of those fears; it is a disparagement to us to give way to them; *Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid?* In the original, the pronoun is feminine, *Who art thou, O woman,* unworthy the name of a man? Such a weak and womanish thing it is to give way to perplexing fears. [1.] It is absurd to be in such dread of a dying man. What! *afraid of a man, that shall die,* shall certainly and shortly die; *of the son of man which shall be made as grass,* shall wither and be trodden down, or eaten up? The greatest men, and the most formidable, that are the terror of the mighty, in the land of the living, are but men, (Ps. ix. 20.) and shall die like men; (Ps. lxxxii. 7.) are but grass sprung out of the earth, cleaving to it, and retiring again into it. Note, We ought to look upon every man as a man that shall die. Those we admire, and love, and trust to, are men that shall die; let us not therefore delight too much in them, nor depend too much upon them. Those we fear we must look upon as frail and mortal, and consider what a foolish thing it is for the servants of the living God to be afraid of dying men, that are here to-day, and gone to-morrow. [2.] It is absurd to fear continually every day, (v. 13.) to put ourselves upon a constant rack, so as never to be easy, nor to have any enjoyment of ourselves. Now and then a danger may be imminent and threatening, and it may be prudence to fear it; but to be always

in a toss, jealous of dangers at every step, and to tremble at the shaking of every leaf, is to make ourselves all our life-time *subject to bondage*, (Heb. ii. 15.) and to bring upon ourselves that sore judgment which is threatened, Deut. xxviii. 66, 67. *Thou shalt fear day and night.* [3.] It is absurd to fear beyond what there is cause; "*Thou art afraid of the fury of the oppressor*"; it is true, there is an oppressor, and he is furious, and he designs, it may be, when he has an opportunity, to do thee a mischief, and it will be thy wisdom therefore to stand upon thy guard; but thou art afraid of him, as if he were ready to destroy, as if he were just now going to cut thy throat, and as if there were no possibility of preventing it." A timorous spirit is thus apt to make the worst of every thing, and to apprehend the danger greater and nearer than really it is. Sometimes God is pleased at once to show us the folly of it; "*Where is the fury of the oppressor?*" It is gone in an instant, and the danger is over ere thou art aware." His heart is turned, or his hands are tied. *Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise*, and the king of Babylon no more. What is gone with all the furious oppressors of God's Israel, that hectoring them, and threatening them, and were a terror to them; they passed away, and lo, they were not, and so shall these.

(2.) The impety of those fears; "*Thou art afraid of a man that shall die, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker*, who is also the Maker of all the world, who has stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, and therefore has all the hosts and all the powers of both at his command and disposal." Note, Our inordinate fearing of man is an implicit forgetting of God. When we disquiet ourselves with the fear of man, we forget that there is a God above him, and that the greatest of men have no power but what is given them from above; we forget the providence of God, by which he orders and overrules all events according to the counsel of his own will; we forget the promises he has made to protect his people, and the experiences we have had of his care concerning us, and his seasonable interposition for our relief many a time, when we thought the oppressor ready to destroy; we forget our Jehovah-jirehs, monuments of mercy in the mount of the Lord. Did we remember to make God our fear and our dread, we should not be so much afraid as we are of the frowns of men, *ch. viii. 12, 13*. Happy is the man that fears God always, *Prov. xxviii. 14*. *Luke xii. 4, 5*.

2. He comforts those that were *in bonds*, *v. 14, 15*. See here, (1.) What they do for themselves; *The captive exile hastens that he may be loosed*, and may return to his own country, from which he is banished; his care is, *that he may not die in the pit*, not die a prisoner, through the inconveniences of his confinement; and that his bread should not fail, either the bread he should have to keep him alive in prison, or that which should bear his charges home; his stock is low, and therefore he hastens to be loosed. Now some understand this as his fault; he is distrustfully impatient of delays, cannot wait God's time, but thinks he is undone, and must die in the pit, if he be not released immediately; others take it to be his praise, that when the doors are thrown open, he does not linger, but applies himself with all diligence to procure his discharge; and then it follows, *But I am the Lord thy God*, which intimates, (2.) What God will do for them, even that which they cannot do for themselves. God has all power in his hand to help the captive exiles; for he has divided the sea, when the roaring of its waves was more frightful than any of the impotent menaces of proud oppressors. He has stilled or quieted the sea, so some think it should be read, *Ps. lxxv. 7*.—*lxxxix. 9*. This is not only a proof of what God

can do, but a resemblance of what he has done, and will do, for his people; he will find out a way to still the threatening storm, and bring them safe into the harbour; *The Lord of hosts is his name*, his name for ever; the name by which his people have long known him. And as he is able to help them, so he is willing and engaged to do it; for he is thy God, O captive exile, thine in covenant. This is a check to the desponding captives; let them not conclude that they must either be loosed immediately, or die in the pit; for he that is the Lord of hosts can relieve them when they are brought ever so low. It is also an encouragement to the diligent captives, who, when liberty is proclaimed, are willing to lose no time; let them know that the Lord is their God, and while they thus strive to help themselves, they may be sure he will help them.

3. He comforts all his people who depended upon what the prophets said to them in the name of the Lord, and built their hopes upon it. When the deliverances which the prophets spake of, either did not come so soon as they looked for them, or did not come up to the height of their expectation, they began to be cast down in their own eyes; but as to this, they are encouraged, (*v. 16*.) by what God says to his prophet, not to this only, but to all his prophets, nor to this, or them, principally, but to Christ, the great Prophet. It is a great satisfaction to those to whom the message is sent, to hear the God of truth and power say to his messenger, as he does here, *I have put my words in thy mouth*, that by them I may plant the heavens. God undertook to *comfort his people*; (*v. 12*.) but still he does it by his prophets, by his gospel; and that he may do it by these, he here tells us, (1.) That his word in them is very true. He owns what they had said to be what he had directed and enjoined them to say; "*I have put my words in thy mouth*, and therefore he that receives thee and them receives me." This is a great stay to our faith, that Christ's doctrine was not his, but his that sent him; and that the words of the prophets and apostles were God's words which he put into their mouths. God's Spirit not only revealed to them the things themselves they spake of, but dictated to them the words they should speak, (*2 Pet. i. 21*. *1 Cor. ii. 13*.) so that these are the true sayings of God, of a God that cannot lie. (2.) That it is very safe; *I have covered thee in the shadow of my hand*, (as before, *ch. xlix. 2*.) which speaks the special protection not only of the prophets, but of their prophecies, not only of Christ but of Christianity, of the gospel of Christ; it is not only the faithful word of God which the prophets deliver to us, but it shall be carefully preserved till it have its accomplishment for the use of the church, notwithstanding the restless endeavours of the powers of darkness to extinguish this light. They shall *prophesy again*, (*Rev. x. 11*.) though not in their persons, yet in their writings, which God has always covered in the shadow of his hand, preserved by a special providence, else they had been lost ere this. (3.) That this word, when it comes to be accomplished, will be very great, and will not fall short of the pomp and grandeur of the prophecy; "*I have put my words in thy mouth*, not that by the performance of them I may plant a nation, or found a city, but plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, may do that for my people which will be a new creation." This must look as far forward as to the great work done by the gospel of Christ, and the setting up of his holy religion in the world. As God by Christ made the world at first, (*Heb. i. 2*.) and by him formed the Old Testament church, (*Zech. vi. 12*.) so by him, and the words put into his mouth, he will set up, [1.] A new world; will again plant the heavens, and found the earth. Sin having put the whole creation into disorder, Christ's

taking away the sin of the world put all into order again; *old things are passed away, all things are become new*; things in heaven and things on earth are reconciled, and so put into a new posture, Col. i. 20. Through him, according to the promise, *we look for new heavens and a new earth*, (2 Pet. iii. 13.) and to this the prophets bear witness. [2.] He will set up a new church, a New Testament church; *he will say unto Zion, Thou art my people*. The gospel-church is called Zion, (Heb. xii. 22.) and Jerusalem, Gal. iv. 26. And when the Gentiles are brought into it, it shall be said unto them, *Ye are my people*. When God works great deliverances for his church, and especially when he shall complete the salvation of it in the great day, he will thereby own that poor despised handful to be his people, whom he has chosen and loved.

17. Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury: thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out. 18. *There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand, of all the sons that she hath brought up*. 19. These two things are come unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee? 20. Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the LORD, the rebuke of thy God. 21. Therefore, hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine: 22. Thus saith thy Lord, the LORD, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thy hand the cup of trembling, *even* the dregs of the cup of my fury, thou shalt no more drink it again: 23. But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.

God having awoke for the comfort of his people, here calls upon them to awake, as afterward, ch. lii. 1. It is a call to awake not so much out of their sleep of sin, (though that also is necessary in order to their being ready for deliverance,) as out of the stupor of despair. When the inhabitants of Jerusalem were in captivity, they as well as those who remained upon the spot, were so overwhelmed with the sense of their troubles, that they had no heart or spirit to mind any thing that tended to their comfort or relief; they were as the disciples in the garden, *sleeping for sorrow*, (Luke xxii. 45.) and therefore when the deliverance came, they are said to be *like them that dream*, (Ps. cxxvi. 1.) Nay, it is a call to awake, not only from sleep, but from death, like that to the dry bones to live, Ezek. xxxvii. 9. "Awake, and look about thee, that thou mayest see the day of thy deliverance dawn, and mayest be ready to bid it welcome: recover thy senses, sink not under thy load, but stand up, and hestir thyself for thy own help." This may be applied to the Jerusalem that was

in the apostle's time, which is said to be *in bondage with her children*, (Gal. iv. 25.) and to have been under the power of a *spirit of slumber*; (Rom. xi. 8.) they are called to awake, and mind the things that belonged to their everlasting peace, and then the cup of trembling should be taken out of their hands, peace should be spoken to them, and they should triumph over Satan, who had blinded their eyes and lulled them asleep. Now,

1. It is owned that Jerusalem had long been in a very deplorable condition, and sunk into the depths of misery.

1. She had lain under the tokens of God's displeasure: he had put into her hand the cup of his fury, her share of his displeasure; the dispensations of his providence concerning her had been such, that she had reason to think he was angry with her. She had provoked him to anger most bitterly, and was made to taste the bitter fruits of it. The cup of God's fury is, and will be, a cup of trembling to all those that have it put into their hands: damned sinners will find it so to eternity. It is said (Ps. lxxxv. 8.) that the dregs of the cup, the loathsome sediments in the bottom of it, *all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them*; but here Jerusalem having made herself as the wicked of the earth, is compelled to wring them out, and drink them; for wherever there has been a cup of fornication, as there had been in Jerusalem's hand, when she was idolatrous, sooner or later there will be a cup of fury, a cup of trembling: therefore stand in awe and sin not.

2. Those that should have helped her in her distress, failed her, and were either unable or unwilling to help her, as might have been expected, v. 18. She is intoxicated with the cup of God's fury, and, being so, staggers, and is very unsteady in her counsels and attempts; she knows not what she says or does, much less knows she what to say or do. In this unhappy condition, of all the sons that she has brought forth and brought up, that she has borne and educated, (and there were many famous ones, for of Zion it was said, *That this and that man was born there*, Ps. lxxxvii. 5.) there is none to guide her, none to take her by the hand, to keep her either from falling, or from shaming herself, to lend either a hand to help her out of her trouble, or a tongue to comfort her under it. Think it not strange, if wise and good men are disappointed in their children, and have not that succour from them which they expected, but if those that were arrows in their hand, prove arrows in their heart, when Jerusalem herself has none of all her sons, either prince, priest, or prophet, that has such a sense either of duty or gratitude, as to help her when she had most need of help. Thus they complain, (Ps. lxxiv. 9.) *There is none to tell us how long*.

Now that which aggravated this disappointment, was,

(1.) That her trouble was very great, and yet there was none to pity or help her; *These two things are come unto thee*, (v. 19.) to complete thy desolation and destruction, even the famine and the sword, two sore judgments, and very terrible. Or, the two things were, the desolation and destruction by which the city was wasted, and the famine and sword by which the citizens perished. Or, the two things were, the trouble itself, made up of desolation, destruction, famine, and sword, and her being helpless, forlorn, and comfortless, under it; "Two sad things indeed, to be in this woful case, and to have none to pity thee, to sympathize with thee in thy griefs, or to help to bear the burthen of thy cares; to have none to comfort thee, by suggesting that to thee which might help to alleviate thy grief, or doing that for thee which might help to redress thy grievances." Or, these two things that were

come upon Jerusalem, are the same with the two things that were afterward to come upon Babylon, (*ch. xlviii. 9.*) *loss of children and widowhood*; piteous cases, and yet, when thou hast brought it upon thyself by thy own sin and folly, who shall be sorry for thee? Cases that call for comfort, and yet, when thou art froward under thy trouble, frettest, and makest thyself uneasy, *by whom shall I comfort thee?* They that will not be counselled, cannot be helped.

(2.) That those who should have been her comforters, were their own tormentors, (*v. 20.*) *They have fainted*, as quite dispirited and driven to despair, they have no patience in which to keep possession of their own souls, and the enjoyment of themselves, nor any confidence in God's promise, by which to keep possession of the comfort of that. They throw themselves upon the ground, in vexation at their troubles, and there they lie at the head of all the streets, complaining to all that pass by, (*Lam. i. 12.*) pining away for want of necessary food; there they lie like a wild bull in a net, fretting and raging, struggling and pulling, to help themselves, but entangling themselves so much the more, and making their condition the worse, by their own passions and discontents. They that are of a meek and quiet spirit, are, under affliction, like a dove in a net, mourning indeed, but silent and patient. They that are of a froward, peevish spirit, are like a wild bull in a net, uneasy to themselves, vexatious to their friends, and provoking to their God: *they are full of the fury of the Lord*, the rebuke of our God. God is angry with them, and contends with them, and they are full of that only, and take no notice of his wise and gracious designs in afflicting them, never inquire wherefore he contends with them, and therefore nothing appears in them but anger at God, and quarrelling with him. They are displeased at God for the dispensations of his providence concerning them, and so they do but make bad worse. This had long been Jerusalem's woful case, and God took cognizance of it. But,

II. It is promised that Jerusalem's troubles shall at length come to an end, and be transferred to her persecutors; (*v. 21.*) *Nevertheless, hear this, thou afflicted.* It is often the lot of God's church to be afflicted, and God has always something to say to her then, which she will do well to hearken to. "Thou art drunken, not as formerly with wine, not with the intoxicating cup of Babylon's whoredoms and idolatries, but with the cup of affliction. Know then, for thy comfort,

1. "That the Lord Jehovah is thy Lord and thy God, for all this." It is expressed emphatically, (*v. 22.*) "*Thus saith thy Lord, the Lord, and thy God*; the Lord, who is able to help thee, and has wherewithal to relieve thee, *thy Lord*, who has an uncontested right to thee, and will not alienate it, *thy God*, in covenant with thee, and who has undertaken to make thee happy." Whatever the distresses of God's people may be, he will not disown his relation to them, nor have they lost their interest in him and in his promise.

2. "That he is the God *who pleads the cause of his people*, as their Patron and Protector; who takes what is done against them as done against himself." The cause of God's people, and of that holy religion which they profess, is a righteous cause, otherwise the righteous God would not appear for it; yet it may for a time be run down, and seem as if it were lost; but God will plead it, either by convincing the consciences, or confounding the mischievous projects, of those that fight against it. He will plead it by clearing up the equity and excellency of it to the world, and by giving success to those that act in defence of it. It is his own cause, he has espoused it, and therefore will plead it with jealousy.

3. That they should shortly take leave of their troubles, and bid a final farewell to them; "*we will take out of thy hand the cup of trembling*, that bitter cup, it shall pass from thee." Throwing away the cup of trembling will not do, nor saying, "We will not, we cannot drink it;" but if we patiently submit, he that put it into our hands will himself take it out of our hands. Nay, it is promised, "*Thou shalt no more drink it again*; God has let fall his controversy with thee, and will not revive the judgment."

4. That their persecutors and oppressors should be made to drink of the same bitter cup which they had drunk so deep of, *v. 23.* See here, (1.) How insolently they had abused, and trampled upon, the people of God; *They have said to thy soul*, to thee, to thy life, *Bow down, that we may go over.* Nay, they have said it to thy conscience, taking pride and pleasure in forcing thee to worship idols. Herein the New Testament Babylon treads in the steps of that old oppressor, tyrannizing over men's consciences, giving law to them, putting them upon the rack, and compelling them to sinful compliances. They that set up an infallible head and judge, requiring an implicit faith in his dictates, and obedience to his commands, do in effect say to men's souls, *Bow down, that we may go over*, and they say it with delight. How meanly the people of God (having by their sin lost much of their courage and sense of honour) truckled to them; *Thou hast laid thy body as the ground.* Observe, The oppressors required souls to be subjected to them, that every man should believe and worship just as they would have them. But all they could gain by their threats and violence, was, that people laid their body on the ground; they brought them to an external and hypocritical conformity, but conscience cannot be forced, nor is it mentioned to their praise that they yielded thus far. But, (2.) Observe how justly God will reckon with those who have carried it so imperiously toward his people; *the cup of trembling shall be put into their hand.* Babylon's case shall be as bad as ever Jerusalem's was. Daniel's persecutors shall be thrown into Daniel's den; let them see how they like it. And the Lord is known by these judgments which he executes.

## CHAP. LII.

The most part of this chapter is of the same subject with the chapter before, concerning the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, which yet is applicable to the great salvation Christ has wrought out for us; but the three last verses are of the same subject with the following chapter, concerning the person of the Redeemer, his humiliation, and exaltation. Observe, I. The encouragement that is given to the Jews in captivity, to hope that God would deliver them in his own way and time, *v. 1..6.* II. The great joy and rejoicing that shall be both with ministers and people upon that occasion, *v. 7..10.* III. The call given to those that remained in captivity to shift for their own enlargement when liberty was proclaimed, *v. 11, 12.* IV. A short idea given here of the Messiah, which is enlarged upon in the next chapter, *v. 13..15.*

1. **A WAKE**, awake; put on thy strength. **O Zion**; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come unto thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. 2. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, *and* sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. 3. For thus saith the LORD, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money. 4. For thus saith

the Lord God, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. 5. Now, therefore, what have I here, saith the Lord, that my people is taken away for nought? They that rule over them make them to howl, saith the Lord, and my name continually every day is blasphemed. 6. Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore *they shall know* in that day that *I am* he that doth speak; behold, *it is I*.

Here,

1. God's people are stirred up to appear vigorous for their own deliverance, *v. 1, 2*. They had desired that God would *awake*, and *put on his strength*, *ch. li. 9*. Here he calls upon them to *awake*, and *put on their strength*, to bestir themselves; let them awake from their despondency, and pluck up their spirits, encourage themselves and one another with hope that all will be well yet, and no longer succumb and sink under their burthen. Let them awake from their distrust, look above them, look about them, look into the promises, look into the providences of God that were working for them, and let them raise their expectations of great things from God. Let them awake from their dullness, sluggishness, and incogitancy, and raise up their endeavours, not to take any irregular courses for their own relief, contrary to the law of nations concerning captives, but to use all likely means to recommend themselves to the favour of the conqueror, and make an interest with him.

God here gives them an assurance, 1. That they shall be reformed by their captivity; *There shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean*, their idolatrous customs shall be no more introduced, or at least not harboured; for when by the marriage of strange wives, in Ezra's time and Nehemiah's, the unclean crept in, they were soon by the vigilance and zeal of the magistrates expelled again; and care was taken that Jerusalem should be a holy city. Thus the gospel-Jerusalem is purified by the blood of Christ and the grace of God, and made indeed a holy city. 2. They shall be relieved, and rescued out of their captivity; that the bands of their necks should be loosed; that they should not now be any longer oppressed, nay, that they should not be any more invaded as they had been; *There shall no more come against thee* (so it may be read, *v. 1*) *the uncircumcised and the unclean*. The heathen shall not again enter into God's sanctuary, and profane his temple, *Ps. lxxix. 1*. This must be understood with a condition; if they keep close to God, and keep in with him, God will keep off, will keep out, the enemy; but if they again corrupt themselves, Antiochus will profane their temple, and the Romans destroy it. However, for some time they shall have peace. And to this happy change, now approaching, they are here called to accommodate themselves. (1.) Let them prepare for joy; "*Put on thy beautiful garments*, no longer to appear in mourning-weeds, and the habit of thy widowhood. Put on a new face, a smiling countenance, now that a new and pleasant scene begins to open." The beautiful garments were laid up then, when the harps were hung on the willow-trees; but now there is occasion for both, let both be resumed together. "*Put on thy strength*, and in order to that, *put on thy beautiful garments*, in token of triumph and rejoicing." Note, *The joy of the Lord will be our strength*, (*Neh. viii. 10*.) and our beautiful garments will serve for armour of proof against the darts of temptation and trouble. And observe,

Jerusalem must then put on her beautiful garments when she is become a holy city, for the beauty of holiness is the most amiable beauty, and the more holy we are, the more cause we have to rejoice. (2.) Let them prepare for liberty; "*Shake thyself from the dust* in which thou hast lain, and into which thy proud oppressors have trodden thee, (*ch. li. 23*.) or into which thou hast in thy extreme sorrow rolled thyself." *Arise, and sit up*; so it may be read. "O Jerusalem, prepare to get clear of all the marks of servitude thou hast been under, and to shift thy quarters; *loose thyself from the bands of thy neck*, be inspired with generous principles, and resolutions to assert thine own liberty." The gospel proclaims liberty to those who were bound with fears, and makes it their duty to take hold of their liberty. Let those who have been weary and heavy-laden, under the burthen of sin, finding relief in Christ, shake themselves from the dust of their doubts and fears, and loose themselves from those bands; for *if the Son make them free, they shall be free indeed*.

II. God stirs up himself to appear jealous for the deliverance of his people. He here pleads their cause with himself, and even stirs up himself to come and save them, for his reasons of mercy are fetched from himself. Divers things he here considers.

1. That the Chaldeans who oppressed them, never acknowledged God in the power they gained over his people; any more than Sennacherib did, who, when God made use of him as an instrument for the correction and reformation of his people, meant not so, *c. i. x. 6, 7*. "*Ye have sold yourselves for naught*, ye got nothing by it, nor did I." *v. 3*. God considers that when they by sin had sold themselves, he himself, who had the prior, nay, the sole, title to them, *did not increase his wealth by the price*, *Ps. xlv. 12*. (They did not so much as pay their debts to him with it; the Babylonians gave him no thanks for them, but rather reproached and blasphemed his name upon that account.) "And therefore they, having so long had you for nothing, shall at last restore you for nothing; *you shall be redeemed without price*; this was promised, *ch. xlv. 13*. Those that give nothing, must expect to get nothing; however, God is a Debtor to no man.

2. That they had been often before in the like distress, had often smarted for a time under the tyranny of their taskmasters, and therefore it was pity that they should now be left always in the hand of these oppressors; (*v. 4*.) *My people went down into Egypt*, in an amicable way to settle there; but they enslaved them, and ruled them with rigour. And then they were delivered, notwithstanding the pride, and power, and policies of Pharaoh. And why may we not think God will deliver his people now? At other times, the Assyrian oppressed the people of God without cause, as when the ten tribes were carried away captive by the king of Assyria; soon after, Sennacherib, another Assyrian, with a destroying army, oppressed, and made himself master of, all the defenced cities of Judah; the Babylonians might not unfily be called *Assyrians*, their monarchy being a branch of the Assyrian; and they now oppressed them without cause. Though God was righteous in delivering them into their hands, they were unrighteous in using them as they did; and could not pretend a dominion over them as their subjects, as Pharaoh might when they were settled in Goshen, a part of his kingdom. When we suffer by the hands of wicked and unreasonable men, it is some comfort to be able to say, that as to them it is without cause, that we have not given them any provocation, *Ps. vii. 3, 5, &c.*

3. That God's glory suffered by the injuries that



were done to his people; (v. 5.) *What have I here, what do I get by it, that my people is taken away for naught?* God is not worshipped as he used to be in Jerusalem, his altar there is gone, and his temple in ruins; but if, in lieu of that, he were more and better worshipped in Babylon, either by the captives, or by the natives, it were another matter, God might be looked upon as in some respect a Gainer in his honour by it; but alas, it is not so. (1.) The captives are so dispirited, that they cannot praise him; instead of this, they are continually howling, which grieves him, and moves his pity. *They that rule over them make them to howl*, as the Egyptians of old made them to sigh, Exod. ii. 23. So the Babylonians, now using them more hardly, extorted from them louder complaints, and made them to howl. This gives us no pleasing idea of the temper the captives were now in; their complaints were not so rational and pious as they should have been, but brutish rather; they *howled*, Hos. vii. 14. However, God heard it, and came down to deliver them, as he did out of Egypt, Exod. iii. 7, 8. (2.) The natives are so insolent, that they will not praise him, but, instead of that, they are continually blaspheming, which affronts him, and moves his anger. They boasted that they were too hard for God, because they were too hard for his people, and set him at defiance, as unable to deliver them, and thus his name continually every day was blasphemed among them. When they praised their own idols, they *lifted up themselves against the Lord of heaven*, Dan. v. 23. "Now," says God, "this is not to be suffered, I will go down to deliver them; for what honour, what rent, what tribute of praise, have I from the world, when my people, who should be to me for a name and a praise, are to me for a reproach? For their oppressors will neither praise God themselves, nor let them do it." The apostle quotes this, with application to the wicked lives of the Jews, by which God was dishonoured among the Gentiles then, as much as now he was by their sufferings, Rom. ii. 23, 24.

4. That his glory would be greatly manifested by their deliverance; (v. 6.) *"Therefore, because my name is thus blasphemed, I will arise, and my people shall know my name, my name, Jehovah."* By this name he had made himself known, in delivering them out of Egypt, Exod. vi. 3. God will do something to vindicate his own honour, something for his great name, and his people, who have almost lost the knowledge of it, shall know it to their comfort, and shall find it their strong tower. They shall know that God's providence governs the world, and all the affairs of it, that it is he who speaks deliverance for them by the word of his power, that it is he only, who at first spake, and it was done. They shall know that God's word, which Israel is blessed with above other nations, shall without fail have its accomplishments in due season; that it is he who speaks by the prophets, it is he, and they do not speak of themselves, for not one iota or tittle of what they say shall fail to the ground.

7. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! 8. Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion. 9. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his

people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem: 10. The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. 11. Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the LORD. 12. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rearward.

The removal of the Jews from Babylon to their own land again, is here spoken of both as a mercy, and as a duty; and the application of v. 7, to the preaching of the gospel, (by the apostle, Rom. x. 15.) plainly intimates that that deliverance was a type and figure of the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, to which what is here said of their redemption out of Babylon ought to be accommodated. 1. It is here spoken of as a great blessing, which ought to be welcomed with abundance of joy and thankfulness.

1. Those that bring the tidings of their release, shall be very acceptable; (v. 7.) *"How beautiful upon the mountains, the mountains round about Jerusalem, over which these messengers are seen coming at a distance, how beautiful are their feet, when it is known what tidings they bring!"* It is not meant so much of the common posts, or the messengers sent express by the government to disperse the proclamation, but rather of some of the Jews themselves, who, being at the fountain-head of intelligence, had early notice of it, and immediately went themselves, or sent their own messengers, to all parts, to disperse the news, and even to Jerusalem itself, to tell the few who remained there, that their brethren would be with them shortly, for it is published not merely as matter of news, but as a proof that Zion's God reigns, for in that language it is published; they say unto Zion, *Thy God reigns*. Those who bring the tidings of peace and salvation, that Cyrus has given orders for the release of the Jews, tidings which were so long expected by them that waited for the consolation of Israel, these good tidings, (so the original reads it, without the tautology of our translation, *good tidings of good*;) they put this construction upon it, *O Zion, thy God reigns*. Note, When bad news is abroad, this is good news, and when good news is abroad, this is the best news, that Zion's God reigns; that God is Zion's God in covenant with her, and as such he reigns, Ps. cxlvi. 10. Zech. ix. 9. *The Lord has founded Zion*, ch. xiv. 32. All events have their rise in the disposals of the kingdom of his providence, and their tendency to the advancement of the kingdom of his grace. This must be applied to the preaching of the gospel, which is a proclamation of peace and salvation; it is gospel indeed, good news, glad tidings, tidings of victory over our spiritual enemies, and liberty from our spiritual bondage. The good news is, that the Lord Jesus reigns, and all power is given to him. Christ himself brought these tidings first; (Luke iv. 18. Heb. ii. 3.) and of him the text speaks; *How beautiful are his feet*; his feet that were nailed to the cross how beautiful upon mount Calvary; his feet when he came *leaping upon the mountains*, Cant. ii. 8. How beautiful were they to those who knew his voice, and knew it to be the voice of their Beloved. His ministers proclaim these good tidings; they ought to keep their feet clean from the pollutions of the world, and then they ought to be beautiful in the eyes of those to whom they are sent, who sit

the Lord God. My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. 5. Now, therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD, that my people is taken away for nought? They that rule over them make them to howl, saith the LORD, and my name continually every day is blasphemed. 6. Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore *they shall know* in that day that I *am* he that doth speak; behold, *it is I*.

Here,

I. God's people are stirred up to appear vigorous for their own deliverance, *v. 1, 2*. They had desired that God would *awake*, and *put on his strength*, *ch. li. 9*. Here he calls upon them to *awake*, and *put on their strength*, to bestir themselves; let them awake from their despondency, and pluck up their spirits, encourage themselves and one another with hope that all will be well yet, and no longer succumb and sink under their burthen. Let them awake from their distrust, look above them, look about them, look into the promises, look into the providences of God that were working for them, and let them raise their expectations of great things from God. Let them awake from their dulness, sluggishness, and incogitancy, and raise up their endeavours, not to take any irregular courses for their own relief, contrary to the law of nations concerning captives, but to use all likely means to recommend themselves to the favour of the conqueror, and make an interest with him.

God here gives them an assurance, 1. That they shall be reformed by their captivity; *There shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean*, their idolatrous customs shall be no more introduced, or at least not harboured; for when by the marriage of strange wives, in Ezra's time and Nehemiah's, the unclean crept in, they were soon by the vigilance and zeal of the magistrates expelled again; and care was taken that Jerusalem should be a holy city. Thus the gospel-Jerusalem is purified by the blood of Christ and the grace of God, and made indeed a holy city. 2. They shall be relieved, and rescued out of their captivity; that the bands of their necks should be loosed; that they should not now be any longer oppressed, nay, that they should not be any more invaded as they had been; *There shall no more come against thee* (so it may be read, *v. 1*) *the uncircumcised and the unclean*. The heathen shall not again enter into God's sanctuary, and profane his temple, *Ps. lxxix. 1*. This must be understood with a condition; if they keep close to God, and keep in with him, God will keep off, will keep out, the enemy; but if they again corrupt themselves, Antiochus will profane their temple, and the Romans destroy it. However, for some time they shall have peace. And to this happy change, now approaching, they are here called to accommodate themselves. (1.) Let them prepare for joy; *"Put on thy beautiful garments"*, no longer to appear in mourning-weeds, and the habit of thy widowhood. Put on a new face, a smiling countenance, now that a new and pleasant scene begins to open." The beautiful garments were laid up then, when the harps were hung on the willow-trees; but now there is occasion for both, let both be resumed together. "Put on thy strength, and in order to that, put on thy beautiful garments, in token of triumph and rejoicing." Note, *The joy of the Lord will be our strength*, (*Neh. viii. 10*.) and our beautiful garments will serve for armour of proof against the darts of temptation and trouble. And observe,

Jerusalem must then put on her beautiful garments when she is become a holy city, for the beauty of holiness is the most amiable beauty, and the more holy we are, the more cause we have to rejoice. (2.) Let them prepare for liberty; *"Shake thyself from the dust in which thou hast lain, and into which thy proud oppressors have trodden thee; (ch. li. 23.) or into which thou hast in thy extreme sorrow rolled thyself."* *Arise, and sit up*; so it may be read. "O Jerusalem, prepare to get clear of all the marks of servitude thou hast been under, and to shift thy quarters; *loose thyself from the bands of thy neck*, be inspired with generous principles, and resolutions to assert thine own liberty." The gospel proclaims liberty to those who were bound with fears, and makes it their duty to take hold of their liberty. Let those who have been weary and heavy-laden, under the burthen of sin, finding relief in Christ, shake themselves from the dust of their doubts and fears, and loose themselves from those bands; for *if the Son make them free, they shall be free indeed*.

II. God stirs up himself to appear jealous for the deliverance of his people. He here pleads their cause with himself, and even stirs up himself to come and save them, for his reasons of mercy are fetched from himself. Divers things he here considers.

1. That the Chaldeans who oppressed them, never acknowledged God in the power they gained over his people; any more than Sennacherib did, who, when God made use of him as an instrument for the correction and reformation of his people, meant not so, *ch. x. 6, 7*. "Ye have sold yourselves for naught, you got nothing by it, nor did I." *v. 3*. God considers that when they by sin had sold themselves, he himself, who had the prior, nay, the sole, title to them, *did not increase his wealth by the price*, *Ps. xlv. 12*. (They did not so much as pay their debts to him with it; the Babylonians gave him no thanks for them, but rather reproached and blasphemed his name upon that account.) "And therefore they, having so long had you for nothing, shall at last restore you for nothing; *you shall be redeemed without price*; this was promised, *ch. xlv. 13*. Those that give nothing, must expect to get nothing; however, God is a Debtor to no man.

2. That they had been often before in the like distress, had often smarted for a time under the tyranny of their taskmasters, and therefore it was pity that they should now be left always in the hand of these oppressors; (*v. 4*.) *My people went down into Egypt*, in an amicable way to settle there; but they enslaved them, and ruled them with rigour. And then they were delivered, notwithstanding the pride, and power, and policies of Pharaoh. And why may we not think God will deliver his people now? At other times, the Assyrian oppressed the people of God without cause, as when the ten tribes were carried away captive by the king of Assyria; soon after, Sennacherib, another Assyrian, with a destroying army, oppressed, and made himself master of, all the defenced cities of Judah; the Babylonians might not unfitly be called *Assyrians*, their monarchy being a branch of the Assyrian; and they now oppressed them without cause. Though God was righteous in delivering them into their hands, they were unrighteous in using them as they did; and could not pretend a dominion over them as their subjects, as Pharaoh might when they were settled in Goshen, a part of his kingdom. When we suffer by the hands of wicked and unreasonable men, it is some comfort to be able to say, that as to them it is without cause, that we have not given them any provocation, *Ps. vii. 3, 5, &c.*

3. That God's glory suffered by the injuries that

were done to his people; (v. 5.) *What have I here, what do I get by it, that my people is taken away for naught?* God is not worshipped as he used to be in Jerusalem, his altar there is gone, and his temple in ruins; but if, in lieu of that, he were more and better worshipped in Babylon, either by the captives, or by the natives, it were another matter, God might be looked upon as in some respect a Gainer in his honour by it; but alas, it is not so.

(1.) The captives are so dispirited, that they cannot praise him; instead of this, they are continually howling, which grieves him, and moves his pity.

*They that rule over them make them to howl*, as the Egyptians of old made them to sigh, Exod. ii. 23.

So the Babylonians, now using them more hardly, extorted from them louder complaints, and made them to howl. This gives us no pleasing idea of the temper the captives were now in; their complaints were not so rational and pious as they should have been, but brutish rather; they *howled*, Hos. vii. 14. However, God heard it, and came down to deliver them, as he did out of Egypt, Exod. iii. 7, 8.

(2.) The natives are so insolent, that they will not praise him, but, instead of that, they are continually blaspheming, which affronts him, and moves his anger.

They boasted that they were too hard for God, because they were too hard for his people, and set him at defiance, as unable to deliver them, and thus his name continually every day was blasphemed among them. When they praised their own idols, they *lifted up themselves against the Lord of heaven*, Dan. v. 23. "Now," says God, "this is not to be suffered, I will go down to deliver them; for what honour, what rent, what tribute of praise, have I from the world, when my people, who should be to me for a name and a praise, are to me for a reproach? For their oppressors will neither praise God themselves, nor let them do it." The apostle quotes this, with application to the wicked lives of the Jews, by which God was dishonoured among the Gentiles then, as much as now he was by their sufferings, Rom. ii. 23, 24.

4. That his glory would be greatly manifested by their deliverance; (v. 6.) "*Therefore, because my name is thus blasphemed, I will arise, and my people shall know my name, my name, Jehovah.*" By this name he had made himself known, in delivering them out of Egypt, Exod. vi. 3. God will do something to vindicate his own honour, something for his great name, and his people, who have almost lost the knowledge of it, shall know it to their comfort, and shall find it their strong tower. They shall know that God's providence governs the world, and all the affairs of it, that it is he who speaks deliverance for them by the word of his power, that it is he only, who at first spake, and it was done. They shall know that God's word, which Israel is blessed with above other nations, shall without fail have its accomplishments in due season; that it is he who speaks by the prophets, it is he, and they do not speak of themselves, for not one iota or tittle of what they say shall fall to the ground.

7. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

8. Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion. 9. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his

people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem: 10. The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. 11. Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the LORD. 12. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rearward.

The removal of the Jews from Babylon to their own land again, is here spoken of both as a mercy, and as a duty; and the application of v. 7. to the preaching of the gospel, (by the apostle, Rom. x. 15.) plainly intimates that that deliverance was a type and figure of the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, to which what is here said of their redemption out of Babylon ought to be accommodated.

I. It is here spoken of as a great blessing, which ought to be welcomed with abundance of joy and thankfulness.

1. Those that bring the tidings of their release, shall be very acceptable; (v. 7.) "*How beautiful upon the mountains, the mountains round about Jerusalem, over which these messengers are seen coming at a distance, how beautiful are their feet, when it is known what tidings they bring!*" It is not meant so much of the common pests, or the messengers sent express by the government to disperse the proclamation, but rather of some of the Jews themselves, who, being at the fountain-head of intelligence, had early notice of it, and immediately went themselves, or sent their own messengers, to all parts, to disperse the news, and even to Jerusalem itself, to tell the few who remained there, that their brethren would be with them shortly, for it is published not merely as matter of news, but as a proof that Zion's God reigns, for in that language it is published; they say unto Zion, *Thy God reigns*.

Those who bring the tidings of peace and salvation, that Cyrus has given orders for the release of the Jews, tidings which were so long expected by them that waited for the consolation of Israel, these good tidings, (so the original reads it, without the tautology of our translation, *good tidings of good*;) they put this construction upon it, *O Zion, thy God reigns*. Note, When bad news is abroad, this is good news, and when good news is abroad, this is the best news, that Zion's God reigns; that God is Zion's God in covenant with her, and as such he reigns, Ps. cxlvi. 10. Zech. ix. 9. *The Lord has founded Zion*, ch. xiv. 32. All events have their rise in the disposals of the kingdom of his providence, and their tendency to the advancement of the kingdom of his grace. This must be applied to the preaching of the gospel, which is a proclamation of peace and salvation; it is gospel indeed, good news, glad tidings, tidings of victory over our spiritual enemies, and liberty from our spiritual bondage. The good news is, that the Lord Jesus reigns, and all power is given to him. Christ himself brought these tidings first; (Luke iv. 18. Heb. ii. 3.) and of him the text speaks; *How beautiful are his feet*; his feet that were nailed to the cross how beautiful upon mount Calvary; his feet when he came *leaping upon the mountains*, Cant. ii. 8. How beautiful were they to those who knew his voice, and knew it to be the voice of their Beloved. His ministers proclaim these good tidings; they ought to keep their feet clean from the pollutions of the world, and then they ought to be beautiful in the eyes of those to whom they are sent, who sit

at their feet, or rather at Christ's in them, to hear his word. They must be *esteemed in love, for their work's sake*, 1 Thess. v. 13. For their message-sake, which is well worthy of all acceptance.

2. Those to whom the tidings are brought, shall be put thereby into a transport of joy.

(1.) Zion's watchmen shall then rejoice, because they are surprisingly illuminated, *v. 8*. The watchmen on Jerusalem's walls shall lead the chorus in this triumph; who they were we are told, *ch. lxiii. 6*. They were such as God set on the walls of Jerusalem, to make mention of his name, and to continue instant in prayer to him, till he again *make Jerusalem a praise on the earth*; these watchmen stand upon their watch-tower, waiting for an answer to these prayers, *Hab. ii. 1*. And therefore when the good news comes they have it first, and the longer they have continued, and the more importunate they have been in praying for it, the more will they be elevated when it comes; they shall *lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing* in concert, to invite others to join with them in their praises. And that which above all things will transport them with pleasure is, that *they shall see eye to eye, face to face*. Whereas God had been a God hiding himself, and they could scarcely discern any thing of his favour through the dark cloud of their afflictions, now that the cloud is scattered they shall plainly see it. They shall see *Zion's king eye to eye*; so it was fulfilled when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and there were those that *saw his glory*, (John i. 14.) and *looked upon it*, 1 John i. 1. They shall see an exact agreement and correspondence between the prophecy and the event, the promise and the performance; they shall see how they look one upon another eye to eye, and be satisfied that the same God spake the one, and did the other. When the Lord shall bring again Zion out of her captivity, the prophets shall thence receive and give fuller discoveries than ever of God's good-will to his people. Applying this also, as the foregoing verse, to gospel-times, it is a promise of the pouring out of the Spirit upon gospel ministers, as a spirit of wisdom and revelation, to lead them into all truth, so that they shall see eye to eye; shall see God's grace more clearly than the Old Testament saints should see it; and they shall herein be unanimous; in these great things concerning the common salvation, they shall concur in their sentiments as well as their songs. Nay, St. Paul seems to allude to this, when he makes it the privilege of our future state, that *we shall see face to face*.

(2.) Zion's waste places shall then rejoice, because they shall be surprisingly comforted; (*v. 9*.) *Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem*; that is, all parts of Jerusalem, for it was all in ruins, and even those parts that seemed to lie most desolate, shall share in the joy; and they, having little expected it, shall break forth into joy, as men that dream, *Ps. cxuvi. 1, 2*. Let them sing together. Note, Those that share in mercies, ought to join in praises. Here is matter for joy and praise. [1.] God's people will have the comfort of this salvation, and what is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. He has redeemed Jerusalem, the inhabitants of Jerusalem that were sold into the hands of their enemies, and thereby he has comforted his people that were in sorrow. The redemption of Jerusalem is the joy of all God's people, whose character it is, that they look for that redemption, *Luke ii. 38*. [2.] God will have the glory of it, *v. 10*. He *has made bare his holy arm*, manifested and displayed his power, in the eyes of all the nations. God's arm is a holy arm, stretched out in purity and justice, in defence of holiness, and in pursuance of his promise. [3.]

All the world will have the benefit of it. In the great salvation wrought out by our Lord Jesus, *the arm of the Lord was revealed, and all the ends of the earth were made to see the great salvation*, not as spectators of it only, as they saw the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, but as sharers in it; some of all nations, the most remote, shall partake of the benefit of the redemption. This is applied to our salvation by Christ; (*Luke iii. 6*.) *All flesh shall see the salvation of God, that great salvation*.

II. It is here spoken of as a great business, which ought to be managed with abundance of care and circumspection. When the liberty is proclaimed,

1. Let the people of God hasten out of Babylon with all convenient speed; though they are ever so well settled there, let them not think of taking root in Babylon, but *Depart ye, depart ye, (v. 11.) go ye out from the midst of her*; not only those that are in the borders, but those that are in the midst, in the heart of the country, let them be gone. Babylon is no place for Israelites. As soon as they have leave to go, let them lose no time; with this word God stirred up the spirits of those that were moved to go up, *Ezra i. 5*. And it is a call to all those who are yet in the bondage of sin and Satan, to make use of the liberty which Christ has proclaimed to them. And if the Son *make them free, they shall be free indeed*.

2. Let them take heed of carrying away with them any of the pollutions of Babylon; *Touch no unclean thing*. Now that God makes bare his holy arm for you, *be ye holy as he is, and keep yourselves from every wicked thing*. When they came out of Egypt, they brought with them the idolatrous customs of Egypt, (*Ezek. xxiii. 3*.) which were their ruin; let them take heed of doing so, now that they come out of Babylon. Note, When we are receiving any special mercy from God, we ought more carefully than ever to watch against all impurity. But especially let them be clean, who *bear the vessels of the Lord*; the priests, who had the charge of the vessels of the sanctuary, (when they were restored by a particular grant,) to carry them to Jerusalem, *Ezra i. 7.—viii. 24, &c.* Let them not only avoid touching any unclean thing, but be very careful to *cleanse themselves according to the purification of the sanctuary*. Christians are made to our God spiritual priests, *Rev. i. 6*. They are to bear the vessels of the Lord, are intrusted to keep the ordinances of God pure and entire; it is a good thing committed to them, and they ought to be clean, to wash their hands in innocency, and so to compass God's altars, and, to carry his vessels, and keep themselves pure.

3. Let them depend upon the presence of God with them, and his protection in their remove; (*v. 12*.) *Ye shall not go out with haste*. They were to go with a diligent haste, not to lose time, nor linger as Lot in Sodom, but they were not to go with a diffident, distrustful haste; as if they were afraid of being pursued, as when they came out of Egypt, or of having the orders for their release recalled and countermanded; no, they shall find that, as for God, his work is perfect, and therefore they need not make more haste than good speed. Cyrus shall give them an honourable discharge, and they shall have an honourable return, and not steal away, *for the Lord will go before them* as their General and Commander-in-chief. *And the God of Israel will be their Rearward*, or, he that will gather up them that are left behind. God will both lead their van, and bring up their rear; he will secure them from enemies that either meet them or follow them, for with his favour will he compass them. The pillar of cloud and fire, when they came out of Egypt, sometimes went behind them to secure their rear, *Exod. xiv. 19*. And God's presence with them

would now be that to them which that pillar was a visible token of. These that are in the way of their duty, are under God's special protection; and he that believes this, will not make haste.

13. Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. 14. As many were astonished at thee; (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men;) 15. So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for *that* which had not been told them shall they see, and *that* which they had not heard shall they consider.

Here, as in other places, for the confirming of the faith of God's people, and the encouraging of their hope in the promise of temporal deliverances, the prophet passes from them, to speak of the great salvation which should in the fulness of time be wrought out by the Messiah. As the prophecy of Christ's incarnation was intended for the ratification of the promise of their deliverance from the Assyrian army, so this of Christ's death and resurrection is to confirm the promise of their return out of Babylon: for both these salvations were typical of the great redemption, and the prophecies of them had a reference to that. This prophecy, which begins here, and is continued to the end of the next chapter, points as plainly as can be at Jesus Christ; the ancient Jews understood it of the Messiah, though the modern Jews take a great deal of pains to pervert it; and some of ours (no friends therein to the Christian religion) will have it understood of Jeremiah; but Philip, who from hence preached Christ to the eunuch, has put it past dispute, that *of him speaks the prophet this; of him, and of no other man*, Acts viii. 34, 35. Here,

I. God owns Christ to be both commissioned and qualified for his undertaking. 1. He is appointed to it: "He is my Servant, whom I employ, and therefore will uphold." In his undertaking, he does his Father's will, seeks his Father's honour, and serves the interests of his Father's kingdom. 2. He is qualified for it; He shall deal prudently, for the *spirit of wisdom and understanding shall rest upon him*, ch. xi. 2. The word is used concerning David when he *behaved himself wisely*, 1 Sam. xviii. 14. Christ is Wisdom itself, and in the contriving and carrying on of the work of our redemption, there appeared much of the *wisdom of God in a mystery*, 1 Cor. ii. 7. Christ, when he was here upon earth, dealt very prudently, to the admiration of all.

II. He gives a short prospect both of his humiliation, and his exaltation. See here,

1. How he humbled himself; *Many were astonished at him*, as they were at David, when by reason of his sorrows and troubles he became a *wonder unto many*, Ps. lxxi. 7. Many wondered to see what base usage he met with, how inveterate people were against him, how inhuman, and what indignities were done him; *His visage was marred more than any man's*, when he was buffeted, smitten on the cheek, and crowned with thorns, and *hid not his face from shame and spitting*. *His face was foul with weepings*, for he was a Man of sorrows; he that really was *fairer than the children of men*, had his face spoiled with the abuses that were done him. Never was man used so barbarously; his form, when he took upon him the form of a servant, was more mean and abject than that of any of the sons of men. They that saw him, said, "Surely never man looked so miserably, a *worm*, and *no man*," Ps. xxii. 6. *The nation abhorred him*, (ch.

xlix. 7.) treated him as the *offscouring of all things*. *Never was sorrow like unto his sorrow*.

2. How highly God exalted him, and therefore exalted him, because he humbled himself. Three words are used for this, v. 13. *He shall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high*. God shall exalt him, men shall extol him, and with both he shall be very high, higher than the highest, higher than the heavens. He shall prosper in his work, and succeed in it, and that shall raise him very high. (1.) Many nations shall be the better for him, for he shall sprinkle them, and not the Jews only; the blood of sprinkling shall be applied to their consciences, to purify them. He suffered and died, and so sprinkled many nations, for in his death there was a *fountain opened*, Zech. xiii. 1. He shall sprinkle many nations by his heavenly doctrine, which shall drop as the rain, and distil as the dew. Moses's did so only on one nation, (Deut. xxxii. 2.) but Christ's on many nations. He shall do it by baptism, which is the washing of the body with pure water, Heb. x. 22. So that this promise had its accomplishment when Christ sent his apostles to disciple all nations, by baptizing or sprinkling them. (2.) The great ones of the nations shall show him respect; *Kings shall shut their mouths at him*, they shall not open their mouths against him, as they have done, to contradict and blaspheme his sacred oracles; nay, they shall acquiesce in, and be well pleased with, the methods he takes of setting up his kingdom in the world; they shall with great humility and reverence receive his oracles and laws, as those who, when they heard Job's wisdom, *after his speech spake not again*, Job xxix. 9, 22. *Kings shall see and arise*, ch. xlix. 7. (3.) The mystery which was kept secret from the beginning of the world, shall by him be *made known to all nations for the obedience of faith*, as the apostle speaks, Rom. xvi. 25, 26. *That which has not been told them shall they see*; the gospel brings to light things new and unheard of, which will waken the attention, and engage the reverence, of kings and kingdoms. This is applied to the preaching of the gospel in the Gentile world, Rom. xv. 21. These words are there quoted according to the Septuagint translation; *To whom he was not spoken of they shall see, and they that have not heard shall understand*. As the things revealed had long been kept secret, so the persons to whom they were revealed, had long been kept in the dark; but now they shall see and consider the glory of God shining in the face of Christ, which before they had not been told of—they *had not heard*. That shall be discovered to them by the gospel of Christ, which could never be told them by all the learning of their philosophers, or the art of their diviners, or any of their pagan oracles. Much had been said in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah, much had been told them, and they had heard it. But as the queen of Sheba found concerning Solomon, what they shall see in him, when he comes, shall far exceed what had been told them. Christ disappointed the expectations of those who looked for a Messiah according to their fancies, as the carnal Jews, but outdid theirs who looked for such a Messiah as was promised. According to their faith, nay, and beyond it, it was to them.

## CHAP. LIII.

The two great things which the Spirit of Christ in the Old Testament prophets testified beforehand, were, the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, 1 Pet. i. 11. And that which Christ himself, when he expounded Moses and all the prophets, showed to be the drift and scope of them all, was, that Christ ought to suffer, and then to enter into his glory, Luke xxiv. 26, 27. But no where in all the Old Testament are these two so plainly and fully prophesied of, as here in this chapter, out of which divers passages are quoted, with application to Christ, in the New Testament. This chapter is

so replenished with the unsearchable riches of Christ, that it may be called rather, *The gospel of the evangelist Isaiah*, than, *The prophecy of the prophet Isaiah*. We may observe here, 1. The reproach of Christ's sufferings, the meanness of his appearance, the greatness of his grief, and the prejudices which many conceived from thence against his doctrine, v. 1. .3. 11. The rolling away of this reproach, and the stamping of immortal honour upon his sufferings, notwithstanding the disgrace and ignominy of them, by four considerations. 1. That therein he did his Father's will, v. 4, 6, 10. 2. That thereby he made atonement for the sin of man, v. 4. . 6, 8, 11, 12. For it was not for any sin of his own that he suffered, v. 9. 3. That he bore his sufferings with an invincible and exemplary patience, v. 7. 4. That he should prosper in his undertaking, and his sufferings should end in his immortal honour, v. 10. .12. By mixing faith with the prophecy of this chapter, we may improve our acquaintance with Jesus Christ, and him crucified, with Jesus Christ, and him glorified; dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification.

1. **WHO** hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? 2. For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

The prophet, in the close of the former chapter, had foreseen and foretold the kind reception which the gospel of Christ should find among the Gentiles, that nations and their kings should bid it welcome, that they who had not seen him should believe in him, and though they had not any prophecies among them of gospel-grace, which might raise their expectations, and dispose them to entertain it, yet upon their first notice of it they should give it its due weight and consideration; now, here he foretells, with wonder, the unbelief of the Jews, notwithstanding the previous notices they had of the coming of the Messiah in the Old Testament, and the opportunity they had of being personally acquainted with him. Observe here,

I. The contempt they put upon the gospel of Christ, v. 1. The unbelief of the Jews, in our Saviour's time, is expressly said to be the fulfilling of this word, John xii. 38. And it is applied likewise to the little success which the apostle's preaching met with among Jews and Gentiles, Rom. x. 16. Note, 1. Of the many that hear the report of the gospel, there are few, very few, that believe it. It is reported openly and publicly, not whispered in a corner, or confined to the schools, but proclaimed to all; and it is so faithful a saying, and so well worthy of all acceptance, that one would think it should be universally received and believed; but it is quite otherwise; few believed the prophets who spake before of Christ; when he came himself, none of the rulers, or of the Pharisees followed him, and but here and there one of the common people; and when the apostles carried this report all the world over, some in each place believed, but, comparatively, very few. To this day, of the many that profess to believe this report, there are few that cordially embrace it, and submit to the power of it. 2. *Therefore* people believe not the report of the gospel, because *the arm of the Lord is not revealed* to them; they do not discern, nor will be brought to acknowledge, that divine power which goes along with the word; *the arm of the Lord is made bare* (as was said ch. lli. 10.) in the miracles that were wrought to confirm Christ's doctrine in the wonder-

ful success of it, and its energy upon the conscience; though it is a still voice, it is a strong one; but they do not perceive this, nor do they experience in themselves that working of the Spirit, which makes the word effectual. They believe not the gospel, because by rebelling against the light they had, they had forfeited the grace of God, which therefore he justly denied them, and withheld from them, and for want of that they believed not. 3. This is a thing we ought to be much affected with; it is to be wondered at, and greatly lamented, and ministers may go to God, and complain of it to him, as the prophet here. What pity is it that such rich grace should be received in vain, that precious souls should perish at the pool's side, because they will not step in and be healed!

II. The contempt they put upon the person of Christ, because of the meanness of his appearance, v. 2, 3. This seems to come in as a reason why they rejected his doctrine—they were prejudiced against his person. When he was on earth, many that heard him preach, and could not but approve of what they heard, would not give it any regard or entertainment, because it came from one that made so small a figure, and had no external advantages to recommend him. Observe here,

1. The low condition he submitted to, and how he abased and emptied himself; the entry he made into the world, and the character he wore in it, were no way agreeable to the ideas which the Jews had formed of the Messiah, and their expectations concerning him, but quite the reverse.

(1.) It was expected that his extraction should be very great and noble; he was to be the Son of David, of the family that had a *name like to the names of the great men that are in the earth*, 2 Sam. vii. 9. But he sprung out of this royal and illustrious family, when it was reduced and sunk, and Joseph, that son of David, who was his supposed father, was but a poor carpenter, perhaps a ship-carpenter, for most of his relations were fishermen. This is here meant by his being a *Root out of a dry ground*, his being born of a mean and despicable family, in the north, in Galilee, of a family, out of which, like a dry and desert ground, nothing green, nothing great, was expected, in a country of such small repute, that it was thought no good thing could come out of it. His mother, being a virgin, was a dry ground, yet from her *he sprang*, who is not only Fruit, but Root. The seed on the stony ground had no root; but though Christ grew out of a dry ground, he is both the Root and the Offspring of David, the Root of the good olive.

(2.) It was expected that he should make a public entry, and come in pomp, and with observation; but, instead of that, he grew up before God, not before men. God had his eye upon him, but men regarded him not; *He grew up as a tender plant*, silently and insensibly, and without any noise, as the corn, that tender plant, grows up, *we know not how*, Mark iv. 7. Christ rose as a tender plant, which, one would have thought, might easily have been crushed, which one frosty night might have nipped. The gospel of Christ, in its beginning, was as a grain of mustard seed, so inconsiderable did it seem, Matth. xiii. 31, 32.

(3.) It was expected that he should have some uncommon beauty in his face and person, which should charm the eye, attract the heart, and raise the expectations, of all that saw him; but there was nothing of that in him; not that he was in the least deformed or misshapen, but *he had no form nor comeliness*, nothing extraordinary, which one might have thought to meet with in the countenance of an incarnate Deity; those who saw him could not see that there was any beauty in him, *that they should desire him, nothing in him more than in another be*



loved, Cant. v. 9. Moses, when he was born, was exceeding fair, to that degree, that it was looked upon as a happy presage, Acts vii. 20. Heb. xi. 23. David, when he was anointed, was of a *beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to*, 1 Sam. xvi. 12. But our Lord Jesus had nothing of that to recommend him. Or, it may refer, not so much to his person, as to the manner of his appearing in the world, which had nothing in it of sensible glory. His gospel is preached, not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but with all plainness, agreeable to the subject.

(4.) It was expected that he should live a pleasant life, and have a full enjoyment of all the delights of the sons and daughters of men, which would have invited all sorts to him; but quite contrary, he was a *Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*; it was not only his last scene that was tragical, but his whole life was so, not only mean, but miserable;

— but one continued chain  
Of labour, sorrow, and consuming pain.—Sir. R. B.

Thus, being made Sin for us, he underwent the sentence sin had subjected us to, that we should *eat in sorrow all the days of our life*, (Gen. iii. 17.) and thereby relaxed much of the rigour and extremity of the sentence as to us. His condition was, upon many accounts, sorrowful; he was unsettled, had not where to lay his head, lived upon alms, was opposed and menaced, and *endured the contradiction of sinners against himself*; his spirit was tender, and he admitted the impressions of sorrow; we never read that he laughed, but often that he wept. Lentulus, in his epistle to the Roman senate concerning Jesus, says, *He was never seen to laugh*; and so worn and macerated was he with continual grief, that, when he was but a little above thirty years of age, he was taken to be near fifty, John viii. 57. Grief was his intimate acquaintance; for he acquainted himself with the grievances of others, and sympathized with them, and he never set his own at a distance; for, in his transfiguration, he talked of his own decease; and, in his triumph, he wept over Jerusalem. Let us look unto him, and mourn.

2. The low opinion that men had of him, upon this account—they being generally apt to judge of persons and things by the sight of the eye, and according to outward appearance; they saw no beauty in him, that they should desire him. There was a great deal of true beauty in him, the beauty of holiness, and the beauty of goodness, enough to render him the Desire of all nations; but the far greater part of those among whom he lived and conversed, saw none of this beauty, for it was spiritually discerned. Carnal hearts see no excellency in the Lord Jesus, nothing that should induce them to desire an acquaintance with him or interest in him. Nay, he is not only not desired, but *he is despised and rejected*, abandoned and abhorred, a Reproach of men, an Abject, one that men were shy of keeping company with, and had not any esteem for; a Worm and no man. He was despised as a mean Man, rejected as a bad man; he was the Stone which the builders refused, they would not have him to reign over them; men, who should have had so much reason as to understand things better, so much tenderness as not to trample upon a man in misery, men, whom he came to seek and save, they rejected him; *"We hid as it were our faces from him, looked another way, and his sufferings were as nothing to us; though never sorrow was like unto his sorrow."* Nay, we not only behaved as having no concern for him, but as loathing him, and having him in detestation." It may be read, *He hid as it were his face from us*, concealed the glory of his majesty, and drew a veil

over it, and therefore *he was despised, and we esteemed him not*, because we could not see through that veil. Christ having undertaken to make satisfaction to the justice of God for the injury man had done him in his honour by sin, (and God cannot be injured except in his honour,) he did it not only by divesting himself of the glories due to an incarnate Deity, but by submitting himself to the disgraces due to the worst of men and malefactors; and thus, by vilifying himself, he glorified his Father: but this is a good reason why we should esteem him highly, and study to do him honour; let *him* be received by us, whom men rejected.

4. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5. But he was wounded for our transgressions, *he was bruised for our iniquities*: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. 8. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. 9. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth.

In these verses, we have,

1. A further account of the sufferings of Christ: much was said before, but more is said here, of the very low condition to which he abased and humbled himself, to which he became obedient, even to the death of the cross.

1. He had griefs and sorrows; being acquainted with them, he kept up the acquaintance, and did not grow shy, no, not of such melancholy acquaintance. Were griefs and sorrows allotted him? He bore them, and blamed not his lot; he carried them, and did neither shrink from them, nor sink under them. The load was heavy, and the way long, and yet he did not tire, but persevered to the end, till he said, *It is finished*.

2. He had blows and bruises; he was stricken, smitten, and afflicted. His sorrows bruised him, and he felt pain and smart from them, they touched him in the most tender part, especially when God was dishonoured, and when he forsook him upon the cross. All along, he was smitten with the tongue, when he was cavilled at and contradicted, put under the worst of characters, and had all manner of evil said against him; at last, he was smitten with the hand, with blow after blow.

3. He had wounds and stripes; he was scourged, not under the merciful restriction of the Jewish law, which allowed not above forty stripes to be given to the worst of malefactors, but according to the usage of the Romans. And his scourging, doubtless, was the more severe, because Pilate intended it as an equivalent for his crucifixion, and yet it proved a preface to it. He was wounded in his hands, and

feet, and side; though it was so ordered, that not a bone of him should be broken, yet he had scarcely in any part a whole skin, (how fond soever we are to sleep in one, even when we are called out to suffer for him,) but from the crown of the head, which was crowned with thorns, to the soles of his feet, which were nailed to the cross, nothing appeared but wounds and bruises.

4. He was wronged and abused; (v. 7.) he was oppressed, injuriously treated, and hardly dealt with. That was laid to his charge, which he was perfectly innocent of, that laid upon him, which he did not deserve, and in both he was oppressed and injured; he was afflicted both in mind and body; being oppressed, he laid it to heart, and though he was patient, was not stupid under it, but he mingled his tears with those of the oppressed, that have no comforter, because *on the side of the oppressors there is power*, Eccl. iv. 1. Oppression is a sore affliction, it has made many a wise man mad; (Eccl. vii. 7.) but our Lord Jesus, though when he was oppressed, he was afflicted, kept possession of his own soul.

5. He was judged and imprisoned; that is implied in his being *taken from prison and judgment*, v. 8. God having made him sin for us, he was proceeded against as a malefactor, he was apprehended and taken into custody, and made a Prisoner, he was judged, accused, tried, and condemned, according to the usual forms of law: God filed a process against him, judged him in pursuance of that process, and laid him in the prison of the grave, at the door of which a stone was rolled and sealed.

6. He was cut off by an untimely death from the land of the living, though he lived a most useful life, did so many good works, and they were all such, that one would be apt to think it was for some of them that they stoned him. He was stricken to the death, to the grave which he made with the wicked, for he was crucified between two thieves, as if he had been the worst of the three; and yet with the rich, for he was buried in a sepulchre that belonged to Joseph, an honourable counsellor. Though he died with the wicked, and, according to the common course of dealing with criminals, should have been buried with them, in the place where he was crucified, yet God here foretold, and Providence so ordered it, that he should make his grave with the innocent, with the rich, as a mark of distinction put between him and those that really deserved to die, even in his sufferings.

II. A full account of the meaning of his sufferings. It was a very great mystery, that so excellent a person should suffer such hard things; and it is natural to ask with amazement, "How came it about? What evil has he done?" His enemies indeed looked upon him as suffering justly for his crimes; and though they could lay nothing to his charge, they *esteemed him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted*, v. 4. Because they hated him, and persecuted him, they thought that God did, that he was his Enemy, and fought against him; and therefore they were the more enraged against him, saying, *God has forsaken him: persecute and take him*, Ps. lxxi. 11. Those that are justly smitten, are smitten of God, for by him princes decree justice, and so they looked upon him to be smitten, justly put to death as a blasphemer, a deceiver, and an enemy to Cæsar. They that saw him hanging on the cross, inquired not into the merits of his cause, but took it for granted that he was guilty of every thing laid to his charge, and that therefore vengeance suffered him not to live. Thus Job's friends esteemed him smitten of God, because there was something uncommon in his sufferings. It is true, he was *smitten of God*, v. 10. (or, as some read it, *he was God's smitten and afflicted*, the Son of God, though smit-

ten and afflicted,) but not in the sense in which they meant it: for though he suffered all these things,

1. He never did any thing in the least to deserve this hard usage. Whereas he was charged with perverting the nation, and sowing sedition, it was utterly false, he had done no violence, but went about doing good. And whereas he was called *that Deceiver*, he never deserved that character, for *there was no deceit in his mouth*, (v. 9.) to which the apostle refers, (1 Pet. ii. 22.) *He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*; he never offended either in word or deed, nor could any of his enemies take up that challenge of his, *Which of you convinceth me of sin?* The judge that condemned him, owned he found no fault in him; and the centurion that executed him, professed that certainly he was a righteous man.

2. He conducted himself under his suffering so as to make it appear that he did not suffer as an evildoer; for though he was oppressed and afflicted, yet he *opened not his mouth*, (v. 7.) no, not so much as to plead his own innocence, but freely offered himself to suffer and die for us, and objected nothing against it. This takes away the scandal of the cross, that he voluntarily submitted to it, for great and holy ends. By his wisdom he could have evaded the sentence, and by his power have resisted the execution; but *thus it was written, and thus it behoved him to suffer; this commandment he received from his Father*, and therefore he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, without any difficulty or reluctance; he is the *Lamb of God*, and as a *sheep is dumb before the shearers*, nay, before the butchers, so he *opened not his mouth*; which denotes not only his exemplary patience under affliction, (Ps. xxxix. 9.) and his meekness under reproach, (Ps. xxxviii. 13.) but his cheerful compliance with his Father's will; *Not my will, but thine be done; lo, I come*. By this will we are sanctified; his making his own soul, his own life, an offering for our sin.

3. It was for our good, and in our stead, that Jesus Christ suffered; this is asserted here plainly and fully, and in a very great variety of emphatical expressions.

(1.) It is certain that we are all guilty before God; we have all sinned, and have come short of the glory of God; (v. 6.) *All we like sheep have gone astray*, one as well as another; the whole race of mankind lies under the stain of original corruption, and every particular person stands charged with many actual transgressions. We have all gone astray from God our rightful Owner, alienated ourselves from him, from the ends he designed us to move towards, and the way he appointed us to move in. We have gone astray like sheep, which are apt to wander, and are unapt, when they are gone astray, to find the way home again. That is our true character; we are bent to backslide from God, but altogether unable of ourselves to return to him. This is mentioned not only as our infelicity, (that we go astray from the green pastures, and expose ourselves to the beasts of prey,) but as our iniquity; we affront God, in going astray from him, for we turn aside every one to his own way, and thereby set up ourselves, and our own will, in competition with God and his will; which is the malignity of sin: instead of walking obediently in God's way, we have turned wilfully and stubbornly to our own way, the way of our own heart, the way that our own corrupt appetites and passions lead us to; we have set up for ourselves, to be our own masters, our own carvers, to do what we will, and have what we will; some think it intimates our own evil way, in distinction from the evil way of others. Sinners have their own iniquity, their beloved sin, which does most easily beset them; their own evil way, that they

are particularly fond of, and bless themselves in.

(2.) Our sins are our sorrows and our griefs, v. 4. Or, as it may be read, *our sickness and our wounds*: the LXX. read it, *our sins*; and so the apostle, 1 Pet. ii. 24. Our original corruptions are the sickness and disease of the soul, an habitual indisposition; our actual transgressions are the wounds of the soul, which put conscience to pain, if it be not scared and senseless. Or, our sins are called our *griefs and sorrows*, because all our griefs and sorrows are owing to our sins; and our sins deserve all griefs and sorrows, even those that are most extreme and everlasting.

(3.) Our Lord Jesus was appointed, and did undertake, to make satisfaction for our sins, and to save us from the penal consequences of them.

[1.] He was appointed to do it, by the will of his Father, for the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. God chose him to be the Saviour of poor sinners, and would have him to save them in this way, by bearing their sins, and the punishment of them; not the *idem*, the same that we should have suffered, but the *tantumdem*, that which was more than equivalent for the maintaining of the honour of the holiness and justice of God in the government of the world. Observe here,

*First*, In what way we are saved from the ruin to which by sin we are become liable; by laying our sins on Christ, as the sins of the offerer were laid upon the sacrifice, and those of all Israel upon the head of the scape-goat. Our sins were *made to meet upon him*; (so the margin reads it;) the sins of all that he was to save from every place and every age, met upon him, and he was met with for them. They were made to fall upon him, (so some read it,) as those rushed upon him, that came with swords and staves to take him. The laying of our sins upon Christ, implies the taking of them off from us; we shall not fall under the curse of the law, if we submit to the grace of the gospel: they were laid upon Christ when he was made Sin, a Sin-offering, for us, and redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a Curse for us; thus he put himself into a capacity to make those easy, that come to him heavy laden under the burthen of sin. See Ps. xl. 6, 12.

*Secondly*, By whom this was appointed; it was the Lord that laid our iniquities on Christ; he contrived this way of reconciliation and salvation, and he accepted of the vicarious satisfaction Christ was to make. Christ was delivered to death by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. None but God had power to lay our sins upon Christ, both because the sin was committed against him, and to him the satisfaction was to be made, and because Christ, on whom the iniquity was to be laid, was his own Son, the Son of his love, and his holy Child Jesus, who himself knew no sin.

*Thirdly*, For whom this atonement was to be made; it was the iniquity of us all, that was laid on Christ; for in Christ there is a sufficiency of merit for the salvation of all, and a serious offer made of that salvation to all, which excludes none that do not exclude themselves. It intimates, that this is the one only way of salvation: all that are justified are justified by having their sins laid on Jesus Christ, and, though they were ever so many, he is able to bear the weight of them all.

[2.] He undertook to do it; God laid upon him our iniquity; but did he consent to it? Yes, he did; for some think that the true reading of the next words, (v. 7.) is, *It was exacted, and he answered*: divine justice demanded satisfaction for our sins, and he engaged to make the satisfaction. He became our Surety, not as originally bound with us, but as Bail to the action; "Upon me be the curse, my Father." And therefore when he was seized,

he indented with those into whose hands he surrendered himself, that that should be his disciples discharge; *If ye seek me, let these go their way*. John xviii. 8. By his own voluntary susception he made himself responsible for our debt, and it is well for us that he was responsible; *thus he restored that which he took not away*.

(4.) Having undertaken our debt, he underwent the penalty. Solomon says, *He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it*. Christ, being surety for us, did smart for it. [1.] He *bore our griefs*, and *carried our sorrows*, v. 4. He not only submitted to the common infirmities of human nature and the common calamities of human life, which sin had introduced, but he underwent the extremities of grief, when he said, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful*. He made the sorrows of this present time heavy to himself, that he might make them light and easy for us. Sin is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery; Christ bore our sins, and so *bore our griefs*, bore them off us, that we should never be pressed above measure. This is quoted, Matth. viii. 17. with application to the compassion Christ had for the sick that came to him to be cured, and the power he put forth to cure them. [2.] He did this by suffering for our sins; (v. 5.) *He was wounded for our transgressions*; to make atonement for them, and to purchase for us the pardon of them. Our sins were the thorns in his head, the nails in his hands and feet, the spear in his side. Wounds and bruises were the consequences of sin, what we deserved and what we had brought upon ourselves, ch. i. 6. That these wounds and bruises, though they are painful, may not be mortal, Christ was wounded for our transgressions, was tormented, or pained, (the word is used for the pains of a woman in travail,) for our revolts and rebellions; he was bruised, or crushed, for our iniquities; they were the procuring cause of his death. To the same purport, v. 8. *For the transgression of my people was he smitten, was the stroke upon him*, that should have been upon us; and so some read it, *He was cut off for the iniquity of my people, unto whom the stroke belonged, or was due*. He was delivered to death for our offences, Rom. iv. 25. Hence it is said to be *according to the scriptures*, according to this scripture, that Christ died for our sins, 1 Cor. xv. 3. Some read this, *by the transgressions of my people*; by the wicked hands of the Jews, who were, in profession, God's people, he was stricken, was crucified and slain, Acts ii. 23. But, doubtless, we are to take it in the former sense, which is abundantly confirmed by the angel's prediction of the Messiah's undertaking, solemnly delivered to Daniel, that he shall *finish transgression, make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity*, Dan. ix. 24.

(5.) The consequence of this to us is, our peace and healing, v. 5. [1.] Hereby we have peace; *The chastisement of our peace was upon him*; he, by submitting to these chastisements, slew the enmity; and settled an amity between God and man; he *made peace by the blood of his cross*. Whereas by sin we were become odious to God's holiness, and obnoxious to his justice, through Christ God is reconciled to us, and not only forgives our sins, and saves us from ruin, but takes us into friendship and fellowship with himself, and thereby *peace*, all good, *comes unto us*, Col. i. 20. *He is our Peace*, Eph. ii. 14. Christ was in pain, that we might be at ease, he gave satisfaction to the justice of God, that we might have satisfaction in our own minds, might be of good cheer, knowing that through him our sins are forgiven us. [2.] Hereby we have healing; for by his stripes we are healed. Sin is not only a crime, for which we were condemned to die, and which Christ purchased for us the pardon of, but it

is a disease, which tends directly to the death of our souls, and which Christ provided for the cure of. By his stripes, the sufferings he underwent, he purchased for us the Spirit and grace of God to mortify our corruptions, which are the distempers of our souls, and to put our souls in a good state of health, that they may be fit to serve God, and prepared to enjoy him. And by the doctrine of Christ's cross, and the powerful arguments it furnishes us with against sin, the dominion of sin is broken in us, and we are fortified against that which feeds the disease.

(6.) The consequence of this to Christ was, his resurrection and advancement to perpetual honour. This makes the offence of the cross perfectly to cease; he yielded himself to die as a Sacrifice, as a Lamb, and, to make it evident that the sacrifice he offered of himself was accepted, we are told here, *v. 8.* [1.] That he was discharged; *He was taken from prison and from judgment*; whereas he was imprisoned in the grave, under a judicial process, lay there under an arrest for our debt, and judgment seemed to be given against him; he was by an express order from heaven taken out of the prison of the grave, an angel was sent on purpose to roll away the stone and set him at liberty, by which the judgment given against him was reversed and taken off; this redeems not only to his honour, but to our comfort; for, being delivered for our offences, he was raised again for our justification. That discharge of the bail amounted to a release of the debt. [2.] That he was preferred; *Who shall declare his generation? his age, or continuance*, so the word signifies; the time of his life? *He rose to die no more, death had no more dominion over him*; he that was *dead, is alive, and lives for evermore*; and who can describe that immortality to which he rose, or number the years and ages of it? And therefore he is advanced to this eternal life, because for the transgression of his people he became obedient to death. We may take it as denoting the time of his usefulness; as David is said to *serve his generation*, and so to answer the end of living. Who can declare how great a blessing Christ by his death and resurrection will be to the world? Some by his generation understand his spiritual seed; Who can count the vast numbers of converts that shall by the gospel be begotten to him, like the dew of the morning?

When thus exalted, he shall live to see  
A numberless believing progeny  
Of his adopted sons; the godlike race  
Exceed the stars that heav'n's high arches grace.  
SIR R. BLACKMORE.

of which generation of his let us pray, as Moses did for Israel, *The Lord God of our fathers make them a thousand times so many more as they are, and bless them as he has promised them*, Deut. i. 11.

10. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. 12. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors: and he bare

the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

In the foregoing verses, the prophet had testified very particularly of the sufferings of Christ, yet mixing some hints of the happy issue of them; here he again mentions his sufferings, but largely foretells the glory that should follow. We may observe, in these verses,

1. The services and sufferings of Christ's state of humiliation. Come, and see how he loved us, see what he did for us.

1. He submitted to the frowns of Heaven; (*v. 10.*) *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him*; to put him to pain, or torment, or grief. The scripture nowhere says, that Christ in his sufferings underwent the wrath of God; but it says here, (1.) That the Lord bruised him, not only permitted men to bruise him, but awakened his own sword against him, Zech. xiii. 7. They esteemed him smitten of God for some very great sin of his own; (*v. 4.*) now it was true that he was smitten of God, but it was for our sin; the Lord bruised him, for he did not spare him, but delivered him up for us all, Rom. viii. 32. He it was that put the bitter cup into his hand, and obliged him to drink it, (John xviii. 11.) having laid upon him our iniquity. He it was that made him Sin and a Curse for us, and turned to ashes all his burnt-offering, in token of the acceptance of it, Ps. xx. 3. (2.) That he bruised him so as to put him to grief. Christ accommodated himself to this dispensation, and received the impressions of grief from his Father's delivering him up; and he was troubled to that degree, that it put him into an agony, and he began to be amazed and very heavy. (3.) It pleased the Lord to do this; he determined to do it, it was the result of an eternal counsel; and he delighted in it, as it was an effectual method for the salvation of men, and the securing and advancing of the honour of God.

2. He substituted himself in the room of sinners, as a Sacrifice. He made his soul an offering for sin; he himself explains this, (Matth. xx. 28.) that *he came to give his life a ransom for many*. When men brought bulls and goats as sacrifices for sin, they made them offerings, for they had an interest in them, God having put them under the feet of man; but Christ made himself an Offering; it was his own act and deed; we could not put him in our stead, but he put himself, and said, *Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit*, in a higher sense than David said, or could say it; "Father, I commit my soul to thee, I deposit it in thy hands, as the life of a sacrifice and the price of pardons." Thus he shall bear the iniquities of the many that he designed to justify, (*v. 11.*) shall take away the sin of the world by taking it upon himself, John i. 29. This is mentioned again; (*v. 12.*) *He bare the sin of many*, who, if they had borne it themselves, would have been sunk by it to the lowest hell. See how this is dwelt upon; for whenever we think of the sufferings of Christ, we must see him in them, bearing our sin.

3. He subjected himself to that which to us is the wages of sin; (*v. 12.*) *He has poured out his soul unto death*, poured it out as water, so little account did he make of it, when the laying of it down was the appointed means of our redemption and salvation; he loved not his life unto the death, and his followers, the martyrs, did likewise, Rev. xii. 11. Or rather, he poured it out as a drink-offering, to make his sacrifice complete; poured it out as wine, that his blood might be drink indeed, as his flesh is meat indeed to all believers. There was not only a colliquation of his body in his sufferings, (Ps. xxii. 14.) *I am poured out like water*, but a surrender of his spirit; he poured out that, even unto death, though he is the Lord of life.

4. He suffered himself to be ranked with sinners, and yet offered himself to be an intercessor for sinners, *v.* 12.

(1.) It was a great aggravation of his sufferings, that he was numbered with transgressors, that he was not only condemned as a malefactor, but executed in company with two notorious malefactors, and he in the midst, as if he had been the worst of the three; in which circumstance of his suffering, the evangelist tells us this prophecy was fulfilled, *Mark* xv. 27, 28. Nay, the vilest malefactor of all, Barabbas, who was a traitor, thief, and murderer, was put in election with him for the favour of the people, and carried it; for they would not have Jesus released, but Barabbas. In his whole life he was numbered among the transgressors: for he was called and counted a sabbath-breaker, a drunkard, and a friend to publicans and sinners.

(2.) It was a great commendation of his sufferings, and redounded very much to his honour, that in his sufferings he made intercession for the transgressors, for those that reviled and crucified him; for he prayed, *Father, forgive them*; thereby showing not only that he forgave them, but that he was now doing that upon which their forgiveness, and the forgiveness of all other transgressors were to be founded. That prayer was the language of his blood, crying, not for vengeance, but for mercy, and therein it speaks better things than that of Abel, even for those who with wicked hands shed it.

II. The graces and glories of his state of exaltation; and the graces he confers on us are not the least of the glories conferred on him. These are secured to him by the covenant of redemption, which these verses give us some idea of. He promises to make his soul an offering for sin, consents that the Father shall deliver him up, and undertakes to bear the sin of many, in consideration of which, the Father promises to glorify him, not only with the glory he had, as God, before the world was, (*John* xvii. 5.) but with the glories of the Mediator.

1. He shall have the glory of an everlasting Father; under this title he was *brought into the world*, (*ch.* ix. vi.) and he shall not fail to answer the title when he goes out of the world. This was the promise made to Abraham, (who herein was a type of Christ,) that he should be *the father of many nations*, and so be *the heir of the world*, *Rom.* iv. 13, 17. As he was the root of the Jewish church, and the covenant was made with him and his seed, so is Christ of the universal church, and with him and his spiritual seed is the covenant of grace made, which is grounded upon, and grafted in, the covenant of redemption, which here we have some of the glorious promises of. It is promised,

(1.) That the Redeemer shall have a seed to serve him and to bear up his name, *Ps.* xxii. 30. True believers are the seed of Christ; the Father gave them to him to be so, *John* xvii. 6. He died to purchase and purify them to himself, fell to the ground as a corn of wheat, that he might *bring forth much fruit*, *John* xii. 24. The word, that incorruptible seed, of which they are born again, is his word: the Spirit, the great Author of their regeneration, is his Spirit, and it is his image that is impressed upon them.

(2.) That he shall live to see his seed; Christ's children have a living Father, and because he lives they shall live also, for he is their Life. Though he died, he rose again, and left not his children orphans, but took effectual care to secure to them the Spirit, the blessing, and the inheritance of sons. He shall see a great increase of them; the word is plural, *He shall see his seeds*, multitudes of them, so many that they cannot be numbered.

(3.) That he shall himself continue to take care

of the affairs of this numerous family; *He shall prolong his days*. Many, when they see their seed, their seed's seed, have wished to depart in peace; but Christ will not commit the care of his family to any other, no, he shall himself live long, and *of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end*, for he ever lives. Some refer it to believers; *He shall see a seed that shall prolong its days*, agreeing with *Ps.* lxxxix. 29, 36. *His seed shall endure for ever*. While the world stands, Christ will have a church in it, which he himself will be the Life of.

(4.) That his great undertaking shall be successful, and shall answer expectation; *The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand*. God's purposes shall take effect, and not one iota or tittle of them shall fail. Note, [1.] The work of man's redemption is in the hands of the Lord Jesus, and it is in good hands; it is well for us that it is in his, for our own hands are not sufficient for us, but he is able to save to the uttermost; it is in his hands, who upholds all things. [2.] It is the good pleasure of the Lord; which denotes not only his counsel concerning it, but his complacency in it; and therefore God loved him and was well pleased in him, because he undertook to lay down his life for the sheep. [3.] It has prospered hitherto, and shall prosper, whatever obstructions or difficulties have been, or may be, in the way of it. Whatever is undertaken according to God's pleasure shall prosper, *ch.* xvi. 10. Cyrus, a type of Christ, shall perform all God's pleasure, (*ch.* xlii. 28.) and therefore, no doubt, Christ shall. Christ was so perfectly well qualified for his undertaking, and prosecuted it with so much vigour, and it was from first to last so well devised, that it could not fail to prosper, to the honour of his Father, and the salvation of all his seed.

(5.) That he shall himself have abundant satisfaction in it; (*v.* 11.) *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied*; he shall see it beforehand, (so it may be understood,) he shall with the prospect of his sufferings have a prospect of the fruit, and he shall be satisfied with the bargain; he shall see it when it is accomplished in the conversion and salvation of poor sinners. Note, [1.] Our Lord Jesus was in travail of soul for our redemption and salvation, in great pain, but with longing desire to be delivered, and all the pains and throes he underwent were in order to it, and hastened it on. [2.] Christ does and will see the blessed fruit of the travail of his soul, in the founding and building up of his church, and the eternal salvation of all that were given him. He will not come short of his end in any part of his work, but will himself see that he has not laboured in vain. [3.] The salvation of souls is a great satisfaction to the Lord Jesus; he will reckon all his pains well bestowed, and himself abundantly recompensed, if the many sons be by him brought through grace to glory. Let him have this, and he has enough. God will be sanctified and glorified, penitent believers shall be justified, and then he is satisfied. Thus, in conformity to Christ, it should be a satisfaction to us, if we can do any thing to serve the interests of God's kingdom in the world. Let it always be our meat and drink, as it was Christ's, to do God's will.

2. He shall have the glory of bringing in an everlasting righteousness; for so it was foretold concerning him, *Dan.* ix. 24. And here, to the same purport, *By his knowledge*, the knowledge of him, and faith in him, *shall my righteous Servant justify many*; for he shall bear the sins of many, and so lay a foundation for our justification from sin. Note, (1.) The great privilege that flows to us from the death of Christ is, justification from sin; our being acquitted from that guilt which alone can ruin us, and accepted into God's favour, which alone can

make us happy (2.) Christ, who purchased our justification for us, applies it to us, by his intercession made for us, his gospel preached to us, and his Spirit witnessing in us. The Son of man had power even on earth to forgive sin. (3.) There are *many* whom Christ justifies, not *all*, multitudes perish in their sins, yet *many*, even as many as he gave his life a ransom for, as many as the Lord our God shall call. He shall justify, not here and there one that is eminent and remarkable, but those of the many, the despised multitude. (4.) It is by faith that we are justified, by our consent to Christ and the covenant of grace; in this way we are saved, because thus God is most glorified, free grace most advanced, self most abased, and our happiness most effectually secured. (5.) Faith is the knowledge of Christ, and without knowledge there can be no true faith. Christ's way of gaining the will and affections is by enlightening the understanding, and bringing that unfeignedly to assent to divine truths. (6.) That knowledge of Christ, and that faith in him, by which we are justified, have reference to him, both as a Servant to God, and as a Surety for us. [1.] As one that is employed for God, to pursue his designs, and secure and advance the interests of his glory; He is my righteous Servant, and as such justifies men. God has authorized and appointed him to do it; it is according to God's will, and for his honour that he does it. He is himself righteous, and of his righteousness have all we received. He that is himself righteous, (for he could not have made atonement for our sin, if he had had any sin of his own to answer for,) is *made of God to us Righteousness, the Lord our Righteousness*. [2.] As one that has undertaken for us. We must know him, and believe in him, as one that bore our iniquities—saved us from sinking under the load by taking it upon himself.

3. He shall have the glory of obtaining an incontestable victory, and universal dominion, *v. 12*. Because he has done all these good services, *therefore will I divide him a portion with the great*, and, according to the will of the Father, *he shall divide the spoil with the strong*, as a great general, when he has driven the enemy out of the field, takes the plunder of it for himself and his army; which is both an unquestionable evidence of the victory, and a recompense for all the toils and perils of the battle. Note, (1.) God the Father has engaged to reward the services and sufferings of Christ with great glory; "I will set him among the great, highly exalt him, and give him a name above every name;" great riches are also assigned him; *He shall divide the spoil*, shall have abundance of graces and comforts to bestow upon all his faithful soldiers. (2.) Christ comes at his glory by conquest; he has set upon the strong man armed, dispossessed him, and divided the spoil. He has vanquished principalities and powers, sin and Satan, death and hell, the world and the flesh; these are the strong that he has disarmed and taken the spoil of. (3.) Much of the glory with which Christ is recompensed, and the spoil which he has divided, consists in the vast multitudes of willing, faithful, loyal subjects that shall be brought in to him; for so some read it, *I will give many to him, and he shall obtain many for a spoil*. God will give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, *Ps. ii. 8*. His dominion shall be from sea to sea. Many shall be wrought upon by the grace of God to give up themselves to him to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him, and hereby he shall reckon himself honoured, and enriched, and abundantly recompensed for all he did and all he suffered. (4.) What God designed for the Redeemer he shall certainly gain the possession of; I will divide it to him, and immediately it follows, *He shall divide*

*it*, notwithstanding the opposition that is given to him: for as Christ finished the work that was given him to do, so God completed the recompense that was promised him for it; for he is both able and faithful. (5.) The spoil which God divided to Christ, he divides, (it is the same word,) he distributes, among his followers; for when he *led captivity captive*, he received gifts for men, that he might give gifts to men; for he did himself reckon it more blessed and honourable to give than to receive, *Acts xx. 35*. Christ conquered for us, and through him we are more than conquerors; he has divided the spoils, the fruits of his conquest, to all that are his; let us therefore cast in our lot among them.

## CHAP. LIV.

The death of Christ is the life of the Church, and of all that truly belong to it; and therefore, very fitly, after the prophet had foretold the sufferings of Christ, he foretells the flourishing of the church, which is a part of his glory, and that exaltation of him which was the reward of his humiliation: it was promised him that he should see his seed, and this chapter is an explication of that promise. It may easily be granted that it has a primary reference to the welfare and prosperity of the Jewish church after their return out of Babylon, which (as other things that happen to them) was typical of the glorious liberty of the children of God, which through Christ we are brought into; yet it cannot be denied but that it has a further and principal reference to the gospel-church, into which the Gentiles were to be admitted. And the first words being understood by the apostle Paul of the New Testament Jerusalem, (*Gal. iv. 26, 27.*) may serve as a key to the whole chapter, and that which follows. It is here promised concerning the Christian church, I. That, though the beginnings of it were small, it should be greatly enlarged by the accession of many to it among the Gentiles, who had been wholly destitute of church-privileges, *v. 1. . 5*. II. That, though sometimes God might seem to withdraw from her, and suspend the tokens of his favour, he would return in mercy, and would not return to contend with them any more, *v. 6. . 10*. III. That though for awhile she was in sorrow, and under oppression, she should at length be advanced to greater honour and splendour than ever, *v. 11, 12*. IV. That knowledge, righteousness, and peace should flourish and prevail, *v. 13, 14*. V. That all attempts against the church should be baffled, and she should be secured from the malice of her enemies, *v. 14. . 17*.

1. **S**ING, O barren, thou *that* didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou *that* didst not travail with child: for more *are* the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD. 2. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes: 3. For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. 4. Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. 5. For thy Maker is thy husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

If we apply this to the state of the Jews after their return out of captivity, it is a prophecy of the increase



of their nation after they were settled in their own land. Jerusalem had been in the condition of a wife written childless, or a desolate, solitary widow; but now it is promised that the city should be replenished, and the country peopled again; that not only the ruins of Jerusalem should be repaired, but the suburbs of it extended on all sides, and a great many buildings erected upon new foundations—That those estates which had for many years been wrongfully held by the Babylonian Gentiles should now return to the right owners. God will again be a Husband to them, and the reproach of their captivity, and the small number to which they were then reduced, shall be forgotten. And it is to be observed, that by virtue of the ancient promise made to Abraham of the increase of his seed, when they were restored to God's favour they multiplied greatly. Those that first came out of Babylon, were but 42,000, (Ezra ii. 64.) about a 15th part of their number when they came out of Egypt; many came dropping to them afterward, but we may suppose that to be the greatest number that ever came in a body; and yet, above 500 years after, a little before their destruction by the Romans, a calculation was made by the number of the paschal lambs, and the lowest computation by that rule, (allowing only ten to a lamb, whereas they might be twenty,) made the nation to be near three millions; Josephus says, seven and twenty hundred thousand and odd; *De Bell. Jud. lib. 7. cap. 17.*

But we must apply it to the church of God in general; I mean, the kingdom of God among men, God's city in the world, the children of God incorporated. Now observe,

I. The low and languishing estate of religion in the world, for a long time before Christianity was brought in. It was like one barren, that did not bear, or travail with child, was like one desolate, that had lost husband and children; the church lay in a little compass, and brought forth little fruit. The Jews were indeed by profession married to God, but few proselytes were added to them; the rising generations were unpromising, and serious godliness manifestly lost ground among them. The Gentiles had less religion among them than the Jews; their proselytes were in a dispersion; and the children of God, like the children of a broken, reduced family, were *scattered abroad*, (John xi. 52.) did not appear, nor make any figure.

II. Its recovery from this low condition by the preaching of the gospel, and the planting of the Christian church.

1. Multitudes were converted from idols to the living God; those were the church's children, that were born again, were partakers of a new and divine nature, *by the word: more were the children of the desolate than the married wife*; there were more good people found in the Gentile church, (when that was set up,) that had been afar off, and without God in the world, than ever were found in the Jewish church. God's sealed ones out of the tribes of Israel are numbered; (Rev. vii. 4.) and they were but a remnant compared with the thousands of Israel; but those of other nations were so many, and crowded in so thick, and lay so much scattered in all parts, that no man could number them, *v. 9.* Sometimes more of the power of religion is found in those places and families that have made little show of it, and have enjoyed but little of the means of grace, than in others that have distinguished themselves by a flourishing profession; and then more are the children of the desolate, more the fruits of their righteousness, than those of the married wife; so the last shall be first.

Now this is spoken of as matter of great rejoicing to the church, which is called upon to break forth into singing upon this account. The increase of the

church is the joy of all its friends, and strengthens their hands. The longer the church has lain desolate, the greater will the transports of its joy be, when it begins to recover the ground it has lost, and to gain more. Even in heaven, among the angels of God, there is an uncommon joy for a sinner that repents; much more for a nation that does so. If the barren fig-tree at length bring forth fruit, it is well, it shall rejoice, and others with it.

2. The bounds of the church were extended much further than ever before, *v. 2, 3.* (1.) It is here supposed that the present state of the church is a tabernacle-state; it dwells in tents, like the heirs of promise of old, (Heb. xi. 9.) its dwelling is mean and moveable, and of no strength against a storm. The city, the continuing city, is reserved for hereafter. A tent is soon taken down and shifted, so the candlestick of church-privileges is soon *removed out of its place*, (Rev. ii. 5.) and, when God pleases, it is as soon fixed elsewhere. (2.) Though it be a tabernacle-state, it is sometimes very remarkably a growing state; and if this family increase, no matter though it be in a tent. Thus it was in the first preaching of the gospel; it was the business of the apostles to disciple all nations, to stretch forth the curtains of the church's habitation, to preach the gospel there where Christ had not yet been named, (Rom. xv. 20.) to leaven with the gospel those towns and countries that had hitherto been strangers to it, and so to lengthen the cords of this tabernacle, that more might be enclosed; which would make it necessary to strengthen the stakes proportionably, that they might bear the weight of the enlarged curtains. The more numerous the church grows, the more cautious she must be to fortify herself against errors and corruptions, and to support her seven pillars, Prov. ix. 1. (3.) It was a proof of divine power going along with the gospel, that in all places it *grew and prevailed mightily*, Acts xix. 20. It broke forth, as the breaking forth of waters; on the right hand, and on the left, on all hands, the gospel spread itself into all parts of the world; there were eastern and western churches. The church's seed inherited the Gentiles, and the cities that had been desolate, destitute of the knowledge and worship of the true God, came to be inhabited, to have religion set up in them, and the name of Christ professed.

3. This was the comfort and honour of the church; (*v. 4.*) "*Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed, as formerly, of the straitness of thy borders, and the fewness of thy children, which thine enemies upbraided thee with, but shalt forget the reproach of thy youth, because there shall be no more ground for that reproach.*" It was the reproach of the Christian religion in its youth, that none of the rulers or princes of this world embraced it, and that it was entertained and professed by a despicable handful of men; but, after awhile, nations were disciplined, the empire became Christian, and then this *reproach of its youth was forgotten*.

4. This was owing to the relation in which God stood to his church, as her husband; (*v. 5.*) *Thy Maker is thy Husband*. Believers are said to be married to Christ, that they may *bring forth fruit unto God*; (Rom. vii. 4.) so the church is married to him, that she may bear and bring up a holy seed to God, that shall be accounted to him for a generation. Jesus Christ is the church's Maker, by whom she is formed into a people; her Redeemer by whom she is brought out of captivity, the bondage of sin, the worst of slaveries. This is he that espoused her to himself; and, (1.) He is *the Lord of hosts*, who has an irresistible power, an absolute sovereignty, and an universal dominion! Kings, who are lords of some hosts, find there are others, who are lords of other hosts, as many and mighty as

theirs; but God is the Lord of *all* hosts. (2.) He is *the Holy One of Israel*, the same that presided in the affairs of the Old Testament church, and was the Mediator of the covenant made with it. The promises made to the New Testament Israel, are as rich and sure as those made to the Old Testament Israel; for he that is our Redeemer, is the Holy One of Israel. (3.) He is, and shall be called, *the Lord of the whole earth*, as God, and as Mediator, for he is the Heir of all things; but *then* he shall be called so, when the ends of the earth shall be made to see his salvation, when all the earth shall call him their God, and have an interest in him. Long he had been called, in a peculiar manner, *the God of Israel*, but now the partition wall between Jew and Gentile being taken down, he shall be called *the God of the whole earth*, there where he has been, as at Athens itself, an *unknown God*.

6. For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. 7. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. 8. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. 9. For this *is as* the waters of Noah unto me; for *as* I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. 10. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.

The seasonable succour and relief which God sent to his captives in Babylon, when they had a discharge from their bondage there, are here foretold, as a type and figure of all those consolations of God which are treasured up for the church in general, and all believers in particular, in the covenant of grace.

1. Look back to former troubles; in comparison with them, God's favours to his people appear very comfortable, v. 6, 8. Observe,

1. How sorrowful the church's condition had been; she had been as a woman forsaken, whose husband was dead, or had fallen out with her, though she was a *wife of youth*; upon which account she is grieved in spirit, takes it very ill, frets, and grows melancholy upon it; or, as one refused and rejected, and therefore full of discontent. Note, Even those that are espoused to God, may yet seem to be refused and forsaken, and may be grieved in spirit under the apprehensions of it; those that shall never be forsaken and left in despair, may yet for a time be perplexed and in distress. The similitude is explained, (v. 7, 8.) *for a small moment have I forsaken thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee.* When God continues his people long in trouble, he seems to forsake them; so their enemies construe it, (Ps. lxxi. 11.) so they themselves misinterpret it, *ch. xlix. 14.* When they are comfortless under their troubles, because their prayers and expectations are not answered, God hides his face from them, as if he regarded them not, nor designed them any kindness. God owns that he had done this; for he keeps an account of the afflictions of his

people, and though he never turned his face against them, (as against the wicked, Ps. xxxiv. 16,) he remembers how often he turned his back upon them. This arose indeed from his displeasure, it was in wrath that he forsook them, and hid his face from them; (*ch. lvii. 17.*) yet it was but in a little wrath; not that God's wrath ever is a little thing, or to be made light of, (*Who knows the power of his anger?*) but little in comparison with what they had deserved, and what others justly suffer, on whom the full vials of his wrath are poured out; he did not stir up all his wrath. But God's people, though they be sensible of ever so small a degree of God's displeasure, cannot but be grieved in spirit because of it. For the continuance of it, it was but *for a moment, a small moment*; for God does not keep his anger against his people for ever, no, it is soon over: as he is slow to anger, so he is swift to show mercy. The afflictions of God's people, as they are light, so they are but for a moment, a cloud that presently blows over.

2. How sweet the returns of mercy would be to them, when God should come and comfort them according to the time that he afflicted them. God called them into covenant with himself, then when they were forsaken and grieved; he called them out of their afflictions, then when they were most pressing, v. 6. God's anger endures for a moment, but God will gather his people when they think themselves neglected; will gather them out of their dispersions, that they may return in a body to their own land; will gather them into his arms, to protect them, embrace them, and bear them up; and will gather them at last to himself; *will gather the wheat into his barn.* He will have mercy on them; this supposes the turning away of his anger, and the admitting of them again into his favour. God's gathering of his people takes rise from his mercy, not any merit of theirs; and it is with *great mercies*, (v. 7.) *with everlasting kindness*, v. 8. The wrath is little, but the mercies great; the wrath for a moment, but the kindness everlasting. See how one is set over against the other, that we may neither despond under our afflictions, nor despair of relief.

11. Look forward to future dangers, and in defiance of them. God's favours to his people appear very constant, and his kindness everlasting; for it is formed into a covenant, here called a *covenant of peace*, because it is founded in reconciliation, and is inclusive of all good. Now,

1. This is as firm as the covenant of providence; it is *as the waters of Noah*, as that promise which was made concerning the deluge, that there should never be the like again to disturb the course of summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, v. 9. God then contended with the world in great wrath, and for a full year, and yet at length returned in mercy, everlasting mercy; for he gave his word, which was as inviolable as his oath, that Noah's flood should never return, that he would never drown the world again; see Gen. viii. 21, 22—ix. 11. And God has ever since kept his word, though the world has been very provoking; and he will keep it to the end; for the world that now is, is reserved unto fire. And thus inviolable is the covenant of grace; *I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, as I have been, and rebuke thee, as I have done.* He will not be so angry with them, as to cast them off, and break his covenant with them, (Ps. lxxxix. 34.) nor rebuke them as he has rebuked the heathen, to destroy them, and *put out their name for ever and ever*, Ps. ix. 5.

2. It is more firm than the strongest parts of the visible creation; (v. 10.) *the mountains shall depart, which are called everlasting mountains, and the hills be removed, though they are called perpetual hills*, Hab. iii. 6. Sooner shall they remove than

God's covenant with his people be broken. Mountains have sometimes been shaken by earthquakes, and removed; but the promises of God were never broken by the shock of any event. The day will come when all the *mountains shall depart*, and all the *hills be removed*, not only the tops of them covered, as they were by the waters of Noah, but the roots of them torn up; for the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burned up; but then the covenant of peace between God and believers shall continue in the everlasting bliss of all those who are the children of that covenant. Mountains and hills signify great men, men of bulk and figure. Do these mountains seem to support the skies, (as Atlas,) and bear them up? They shall depart and be removed, creature-confidences shall fail us; *in vain is salvation hoped for from those hills and mountains*: but the firmament is firm, agreeably to its name; when those who seem to prop it are gone, when our friends fail us, our God does not, nor does his kindness depart. Do these mountains threaten, and seem to top the skies, and bid defiance to them, as Pelion and Ossa? Do the kings of the earth, and the rulers, set themselves against the Lord? They shall depart and be removed; great mountains, that stand in the way of the salvation of the church, shall be *made plain*; (Zech. iv. 7.) but God's kindness shall never depart from his people, for whom he loves, he loves to the end; nor shall the covenant of his peace ever be removed, for he is the Lord that has mercy on his people, *Therefore* the covenant is immovable and inviolable, because it is built not on our merit, which is a mutable uncertain thing,\* but on God's mercy, which is from everlasting to everlasting.

11. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. 12. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. 13. And all thy children *shall be taught of the LORD*; and great *shall be the peace of thy children*. 14. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee. 15. Behold, they shall surely gather together, *but not by me*: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. 16. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. 17. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD; and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

Very precious promises are here made to the church in her low condition, that God would not

only continue his love to his people under their troubles, as before, but that he would restore them to their former prosperity, nay, that he would raise them to greater prosperity than any they had yet enjoyed. In the foregoing chapter we had the humiliation and exaltation of Christ, here we have the humiliation and exaltation of the church; for if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him. Observe,

I. The distressed state the church is here reduced to by the providence of God; (v. 11.) "*O thou afflicted*, poor and indigent society, that art *tossed with tempests*, like a ship driven from her anchors by a storm, and hurried into the ocean, where she is ready to be swallowed up by the waves, and in this condition *not comforted* by any compassionate friend that will sympathize with thee, or suggest to thee any encouraging considerations, (Eccl. iv. 1.) not comforted by any allay to thy trouble, or prospect of deliverance out of it." This was the condition of the Jews in Babylon, and afterward for a time, under Antiochus; it is often the condition of Christian churches, and of particular believers; without are fightings, within are fears, they are like the disciples in a storm, ready to perish; and where is their faith?

II. The glorious state the church is here advanced to by the promise of God. God takes notice of the afflicted, distressed state of his church, and comforts her, when she is most disconsolate, and has no other comforter. Let the people of God, when they are afflicted and tossed, think they hear God speaking comfortably to them by these words, taking notice of their griefs and fears, what afflictions they are under, what tosses they are in, and what comforts their case calls for; when they bemoan themselves, God bemoans them, and speaks to them with pity, *O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted*; for in all their afflictions he is afflicted. But this is not all; he engages to raise her up out of her affliction, and encourages her with the assurance of great things he would do for her, both for her prosperity, and for the securing of that prosperity to her.

1. Whereas now she lay in disgrace, God promises that which would be her beauty and honour, which would make her easy to herself, and amiable in the eyes of others.

(1.) This is here promised by a similitude taken from a city, and it is an apt similitude, for the church is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Whereas now Jerusalem lay in ruins, a heap of rubbish, it shall not only be rebuilt, but beautified, and appear more splendid than ever; the stones shall be laid not only firm, but fine, laid with fair colours, they shall be *glittering stones*, 1 Chron. xxix. 2. The foundation shall be laid or garnished with *sapphires*, the most precious of the precious stones here mentioned; for Christ, the church's Foundation, and the Foundation of the apostles and prophets, is precious above every thing else. The windows of this house, city, or temple, shall be made of *agates*, the gates of *carbuncles*, and all the borders, the walls that enclose the courts, or the boundaries by which her limits are marked, the mere stones shall be of *pleasant stones*, v. 12. Never was this literally true; but it intimates, [1.] That God having graciously undertaken to build his church, we may expect that to be done for it, that to be wrought in it, which is very great and uncommon. [2.] That the glory of the New Testament church shall far exceed that of the Jewish church; not in external pomp and splendour, but in those gifts and graces of the Spirit which are infinitely more valuable; that wisdom which is *more precious than rubies*, (Prov. iii. 15.) than the precious onyx and the sapphire, and which the *topaz of Ethio pia cannot equal*, Job xxviii. 16, 19. [3.] That the

\* Prior to the age of Mr. Henry, the term *merit* was occasionally applied even by evangelical divines, (chiefly indeed on the Continent,) to the actions of sincere believers. While this circumstance may serve to qualify our censure, the term itself needs so much explanation, in order to make the use of it appear compatible with the system of grace, that we presume Mr. Henry adopted it through mere inadvertency.—Ed.

wealth of this world, and those things of it that are accounted most precious, shall be despised by all the true living members of the church, as having no value, no glory, in comparison with that which far excels. That which the children of this world lay up in their treasures, and too often in their hearts, the children of God make pavements of, and put under their feet, the fittest place for it.

[1.] It is here promised in the particular instances of those things that shall be the beauty and honour of the church, which are knowledge, holiness, and love, the very image of God in which man was created, renewed, and restored. And these are the sapphires, and carbuncles, the precious and pleasant stones, with which the gospel-temple shall be enriched and beautified, and these wrought by the power and efficacy of those doctrines which the apostle compares to gold, silver, and precious stones, that are to be *built upon the foundation*, 1 Cor. iii. 12. Then the church is all glorious,

[1.] When it is full of the knowledge of God, and that is promised here; (v. 13.) *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.* The church's children, being born of God, shall be taught of God; being his children by adoption, he will take care of their education. It was promised, (v. 1.) that the church's children shall be many; but lest we should think that, being many, as sometimes it happens in numerous families, they will be neglected, and not have instruction given them so carefully as if they were but few, God here takes that work into his own hand; *They shall all be taught of the Lord*; and none teaches like him. *First*, It is a promise of the means of instruction, and those means authorized by a divine institution; *They shall all be taught of God*, they shall be taught by those whom God shall appoint, and whose labours shall be under his direction and blessing. He will ordain the methods of instruction, and by his word and ordinances will diffuse a much greater light than the Old Testament church had. Care shall be taken for the teaching of the church's children, that knowledge may be transmitted from generation to generation, and that all may be enriched with it, from the least even to the greatest. *Secondly*, It is a promise of the Spirit of illumination. Our Saviour quotes it with application to gospel-grace, and makes it to have its accomplishment in all those that were brought to believe in him; (John vi. 45.) *It is written in the prophets, They shall all be taught of God*; whence he infers, that these, and those only, come to him by faith, that have heard and learned of the Father, that are *taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus*, Eph. iv. 21. There shall be a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace upon Christians, *to teach them all things*, John xiv. 26.

[2.] When the members of it live in love and unity among themselves; *Great shall be the peace of thy children.* Peace may be taken here for all good. As where no knowledge of God is, no good can be expected; so those that are taught of God to know him, are in a fair way to prosper for both worlds. *Great peace have they that know and love God's law*, Ps. cxix. 165. But it is often put for love and unity; and so we may take it. All that are taught of God, are taught to *love one another*, (1 Thess. iv. 9.) and that will keep peace among the church's children, and prevent their falling out by the way.

[3.] When holiness reigns; for that above any thing is the beauty of the church; (v. 14.) *In righteousness shall thou be established*; the reformation of manners, the restoration of purity, the due administration of public justice, and the prevailing of honesty and fair dealing among men, are the strength and stability of any church or state. The kingdom of God, set up by the gospel of Christ, is

not meat and drink, but this righteousness and peace, holiness and love.

2. Whereas now she lay in danger, God promises that which would be her protection and security. God engages here that though in the day of her distress without were fightings and within were fears, now she shall be safe from both.

(1.) There shall be no fears within; (v. 14.) *"Thou shalt be far from oppression"*: those that have oppressed thee shall be removed, those that would oppress thee shall be restrained, and therefore thou shalt not fear, but mayest look upon it as a thing at a distance, that thou art now in no danger of. Thou shalt be far from terror, not only from evil, but from the fear of evil, for it shall not come near thee, so as to do thee any hurt, or to put thee in any fright." Note, Those are far from terror, that are far from oppression; for it is as great a terror as can fall on a people, to have the rod of government turned into the serpent of oppression, because against this there is no fence, nor is there any flight from it.

(2.) There shall be no fightings without; though attempts should be made upon them to insult them, to invade their country, or besiege their towns, they should all be in vain, and none of them succeed, v. 15. It is granted, *"They shall surely gather together against thee"*, thou must expect it, the confederate force of hell and earth will be renewing their assaults." As long as there is a devil in hell, and a persecutor out of it, God's people must expect frequent alarms; but, [1.] God will not own them, will not give them either commission or countenance; they gather together, hand joins in hand, but it is not by me. God gave them no such order as he did to Sennacherib, *to take the spoil, and take the prey*, ch. x. 6. And therefore, [2.] Their attempt will end in their own ruin; *"Whosoever shall gather together against thee"*, be they ever so many and ever so mighty, they shall not only be baffled, but they shall fall for thy sake, or they shall fall before thee, which shall be the just punishment of their enmity to thee." God will make them to fall for the sake of the love he bears to his church, and the care he has of it, in answer to the prayers made by his people, and in pursuance of the promises made to them; *"They shall fall, that thou mayest stand"*, Ps. xxvii. 2.

Now, that we may with the greatest assurance depend upon God for the safety of his church, we have here,

*First*, The power of God over the church's enemies asserted, v. 16. The truth is, they have no power but what is given them from above, and he that gave them their power can limit and restrain them; *Hitherto shall they go, and no further.* 1. They cannot carry on their design without arms and weapons of war; and the smith that makes those weapons is God's creature, and he gave them his skill to work in iron and brass, (Exod. xxxi. 3, 4.) and particularly to make proper instruments for warlike purposes. It is melancholy to think, as if men did not die fast enough of themselves, how ingenious and industrious they are to make instruments of death, and to find out ways and means to kill one another. *The smith blows the coals in the fire*, to make his iron malleable, to soften it first, that it may be hardened into steel, and so he may bring forth an instrument proper for their work that seek to destroy. It is the iron age that is the age of war. But God has created the smith, and therefore can tie his hands, so that the project of the enemy shall miscarry, (as many a project has done,) for want of arms and ammunition. Or the smith that forges the weapons is perhaps put here for the council of war that forms the design, blows the coals of contention, and brings forth the plan of

the war; these can do no more than God will let them. 2. They cannot carry it on without men; they must have soldiers; and it is *God that created the waster to destroy*. Military men value themselves upon their great offices and splendid titles; and even the common soldiers call themselves *gentlemen*; but God calls them *wasters made to destroy*, for wasting and destruction are their business. They think their own ingenuity, labour, and experience made them soldiers; but it was God that created them, and gave them strength and spirit for that hazardous employment; and therefore he not only can restrain them, but will serve his own purposes and designs by them.

*Secondly*, The promise of God concerning the church's safety solemnly laid down, as the *heritage of the servants of the Lord*, (v. 17.) as that which they may depend upon and be confident of, That God will protect them from their adversaries both in camps and courts.

1. From their field-adversaries, that think to destroy them by force and violence, and dint of sword; "*No weapon that is formed against thee*," (though ever so artfully formed by the smith that blows the coals, (v. 16.) though ever so skillfully managed by the waster that seeks to destroy,) "*shall prosper*; it shall not prove strong enough to do any harm to the people of God; it shall miss its mark, shall fall out of the hand, or perhaps recoil in the face of him that uses it against thee." It is the happiness of the church, that *no weapon formed against it shall prosper* long, and therefore the folly of its enemies will at length be made manifest to all, for they are but preparing instruments of ruin for themselves.

2. From their law-adversaries, that think to run them down, under colour of right and justice. When the weapons of war do not prosper, there are tongues that rise in judgment; both are included in the gates of hell, that seek to destroy the church; for they had their courts of justice, as well as their magazines and military stores, in their gates. The tongues that rise in judgment against the church, are such as either demand a dominion over it, as if God's children were their lawful captives, pretending an authority to oppress their consciences; or they are such as misrepresent them, and falsely accuse them, and by slanders and calumnies endeavour to make them odious to the people and obnoxious to the government. This the enemies of the Jews did, to incense the kings of Persia against them; (Ezra iv. 12. Esth. iii. 8.) "But these insulting, threatening tongues thou shalt condemn; thou shalt have wherewith to answer their insolent demands, and to put to silence their malicious reflections. *Thou shalt do it by well-doing*, (1 Pet. ii. 15.) by doing that which will make thee manifest in the consciences even of thine adversaries, that thou art not what thou art represented to be. *Thou shalt condemn them*, God shall condemn them for thee; *he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light*, Ps. xxxvii. 6. Thou shalt condemn them as Noah condemned the old world that reproached him, by building the ark, and so saving his house, in contempt of their contempt." The day is coming when God will reckon with wicked men for all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him, Jude 15.

The last words refer not only to this promise, but to all that go before; *This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord*. God's servants are his sons, for he has provided an inheritance for them, rich, sure, and indefeasible. God's promises are their *heritage for ever*; (Ps. cxix. 111.) and *their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord*. God will clear up the righteousness of their cause before men; it is with him, for he knows it, it is with him for he will plead it.

Or, their reward for their righteousness, and for all that which they have suffered unrighteously, is of God, that God who judges in the earth, and with whom *verily there is a reward for the righteous*. Or, their righteousness itself, all that in them is good and right, is of God, who works it in them; it is of Christ who is made Righteousness to them. Whenever God designs a heritage for hereafter, in them he will work righteousness now.

## CHAP. LV

As we had much of Christ in the 53d chapter, and much of the church of Christ in the 54th chapter, so in this chapter we have much of the covenant of grace made with us in Christ. The *sure mercies of David* which are promised here, (v. 3.) are applied by the apostle to the benefits which flow to us from the resurrection of Christ, (Acts xiii. 34.) which may serve as a key to this chapter; not but that it was intended for the comfort of the people of God that lived then, especially of the captives in Babylon, and the other dispersed of Israel; but unto us was this gospel preached as well as unto them, and much more clearly and fully in the New Testament. Here is, I. A free and gracious invitation to all, to come and take the benefit of gospel-grace, v. 1. II. Pressing arguments to enforce this invitation, v. 2. . . 4. III. A promise of the success of this invitation among the Gentiles, v. 5. IV. An exhortation to repentance and reformation, with great encouragement given to hope for pardon and forgiveness thereupon, v. 6. . . 9. V. The ratification of all this, with the certain efficacy of the word of God, v. 10, 11. And a particular instance of the accomplishment of it in the return of the Jews out of their captivity, which was intended for a sign of the accomplishment of all these other promises.

1. **H**O, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. 2. Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which* is not bread, and your labour for *that which* satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which* is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. 3. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *even the sure mercies of David*. 4. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. 5. Behold, thou shalt call a nation *that* thou knowest not; and nations *that* knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

Here,

I. We are all invited to come and take the benefit of that provision which the grace of God has made for poor souls in the new covenant, of that which is the *heritage of the servants of the Lord*, (ch. liv. 17.) and not only their heritage hereafter, but their cup now, v. 1. Observe,

1. Who are invited; *Ho, every one*. Not the Jews only, to whom first the word of salvation was sent, but the Gentiles, the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind, are called to this marriage-supper, whoever can be picked up out of the high-ways and the hedges. It intimates that in Christ there is enough for all, and enough for each; that ministers are to make a general offer of life and salvation to all; that in gospel-times the invitation should be more largely made than it had been, and should be sent to the Gentiles; and that the gospel-

covenant excludes none that do not exclude themselves. The invitation is published with an *Oyez, Ho*, take notice of it. *He that has ears to hear, let him hear.*

2. What is the qualification required in those that shall be welcome; they must thirst. All shall be welcome to gospel-grace, upon those terms only, that gospel-grace be welcome to them. Those that are satisfied with the world and its enjoyments for a portion, and seek not for happiness in the favour of God; those that depend upon the merit of their own works for a righteousness, and see no need they have of Christ and his righteousness; these do not thirst, they have no sense of their need, are in no pain or uneasiness about their souls, and therefore will not condescend so far as to be beholden to Christ: but those that thirst, are invited to the waters, as those that labour, and are heavy-laden, are invited to Christ for rest. Note, Where God gives grace, he first gives to thirst after it; and where he has given to thirst after it, he will give it, Ps. lxxxix. 10.

3. Whither they are invited; *Come ye to the waters.* Come to the water-side, to the ports, and quays, and wharves, on the navigable rivers, into which goods are imported, thither come and buy, for that is the market-place of foreign commodities; and to us they would have been for ever foreign, if Christ had not brought in an everlasting righteousness. Come to Christ, for he is the Fountain opened, he is the Rock smitten. Come to holy ordinances, to those streams that make glad the city of our God, come to them, and though they may seem to you plain and common things, like waters, yet to those who believe in Christ, the things signified will be as wine and milk, abundantly refreshing. Come to the healing waters, come to the living waters; whoever will, let him come, and *take of the waters of life*, Rev. xxii. 17. Our Saviour referred to it, (John vii. 37.) *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.*

4. What are they invited to do; (1.) *Come, and buy.* Never did any tradesman court customers that he hoped to get by, so as Christ courts us to that which we only are to be gainers by; "Come and buy, and we can assure you, you shall have a good bargain, which you will never repent of or lose by. Come and buy; make it your own by an application of the grace of the gospel to yourselves; make it your own upon Christ's terms, nay, your own upon any terms, and stand not hesitating about the terms, or deliberating whether you shall agree to them." (2.) "*Come, and eat; make it still more your own, as that which we eat is more our own than that which we only buy.*" We must buy the truth, not that we may lay it by, to be looked at, but that we may feed and feast upon it, and that the spiritual life may be nourished and strengthened by it. We must buy necessary provisions for our souls, be willing to part with any thing, though ever so dear to us, so that we may but have Christ and his graces and comforts; we must part with sin, because it is an opposition to Christ; part with all opinion of our own righteousness, as standing in competition with Christ; and part with life itself, and its most necessary supports, rather than quit our interest in Christ. And when we have bought what we need, let us not deny ourselves the comfortable use of it, but enjoy it, and eat the labour of our hands; buy, and eat.

5. What is the provision they are invited to; "*Come, and buy wine and milk, which will not only quench the thirst,*" (fair water would do that,) "*but nourish the body, and revive the spirits.*" The world comes short of our expectations; we promise ourselves, at least, water in it, but we are disappointed of that, as *the troops of Tema*, Job vi. 19. But Christ outdoes our expectations; we come

to the waters, and would be glad of them, but we find there wine and milk, which were the staple commodities of the tribe of Judah, and which the Shiloh of that tribe is furnished with to entertain the *gathering of the people to him*; Gen. xlix. 10, 12. *His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.* We must come to Christ, to have milk for babes, to nourish and cherish them that are but lately born again; and with him strong men shall find that which will be a cordial to them; they shall have wine to make glad their hearts. We must part with our puddle-water, nay, with our poison, that we may procure this wine and milk.

6. The free communication of this provision; *Buy it without money and without price.* A strange way of buying, not only without ready money, (that is common enough,) but without any money, or the promise of any; yet it seems not so strange to those who have observed Christ's counsel to Laodicea, that was wretchedly poor, to *come and buy*, Rev. iii. 17, 18. Our buying without money, intimates, (1.) That the gifts offered us are invaluable, and such as no price can be set upon. Wisdom is that which cannot be gotten for gold. (2.) That he who offers them has no need of us, or of any returns we can make him. He makes us these proposals, not because he has occasion to sell, but because he has a disposition to give. (3.) That the things offered are already bought and paid for; Christ purchased them at the full value, with price, not with money, but *his own blood*, 1 Pet. i. 19. (4.) That we shall be welcome to the benefits of the promise, though we are utterly unworthy of them, and cannot make a tender of any thing that looks like a valuable consideration. We ourselves are not of any value, nor any thing we have, or can do, and we must own it, that if Christ and heaven be ours, we may see ourselves for ever indebted to free grace.

II. We are earnestly pressed and persuaded (and O that we would be prevailed with!) to accept this invitation, and make this good bargain for ourselves.

1. That which we are persuaded to is, to hearken to God, and to his proposals; "*Hearken diligently unto me*, v. 2. Not only give me the hearing, but approve of what I say, and apply it to yourselves, v. 3. *Incline your ear*, as you do to that which you find yourselves concerned in, and pleased with; bow the ear, and let the proud heart stoop, to the humbling methods of the gospel; bend the ear this way, that you may hear with attention and remark; hear, and come unto me, not only come and treat with me, but comply with me, come up to my terms. Accept God's offers as very advantageous, answer his demands as very fit and reasonable."

2. The arguments used to persuade us to this, are taken,

(1.) From the unspeakable wrong we do to ourselves if we neglect and refuse this invitation; "*Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, which will not yield you, no, not beggar's food, dry bread, when with me you may have wine and milk without money? Wherefore do you spend your labour, and toil for that which will not be so much as dry bread to you, for it satisfies not?*"

See here, [1.] The vanity of the things of this world; they are not bread, not proper food for a soul, they afford no suitable nourishment or refreshment. Bread is the staff of the natural life, but it affords no support at all to the spiritual life. All the wealth and pleasure in the world will not make one meal's meat for a soul. Eternal truth and eternal good are the only food for a rational and immortal soul, the life of which consists in reconciliation and conformity to God, and in union and communion with him, which the things of the world will not at all befrend. *They satisfy not*, they yield not any solid comfort and content to the soul, nor enable it to say, "Now



1 have what I would have." Nay, they do not satisfy even the appetites of the body; the more men have, the more they would have, Eccl. i. 8. *Human* was unsatisfied in the midst of his abundance. They flatter, but they do not fill; they please for awhile, like the dream of a hungry man, who wakes and his soul is empty. They soon surfeit it, but they never satisfy; they cloy a man, but do not content him, or make him truly easy. It is all vanity and vexation.

[2.] The folly of the children of this world; they spend their money and labour for these uncertain, unsatisfying things. Rich people live by their money, poor people by their labour; but both mistake their truest interest, while the one is trading, the other toiling, for the world, both promising themselves satisfaction and happiness in it, but both miserably disappointed. God vouchsafes compassionately to reason with them; "Wherefore do you thus set against your own interest? Why do you suffer yourselves to be thus imposed upon?" Let us reason thus with ourselves, and let the result of these reasonings be, a holy resolution not to labour for the meat that perishes, but for that which endures to everlasting life, John vi. 27. Let all the disappointments we meet with in the world, help to drive us to Christ, and to seek for satisfaction in him only. This is the way to make that sure, which will be made sure.

[2.] From the unspeakable kindness we do to ourselves, if we accept this invitation, and comply with it.

[1.] Hereby we secure to ourselves present pleasure and satisfaction; "If you hearken to Christ, you eat that which is good, which is both wholesome and pleasant, good in itself and good for you." God's good word and promise, a good conscience, and the comforts of God's good Spirit, are a continual feast to those that hearken diligently and obediently to Christ. Their souls shall *delight themselves in fatness*; in the richest and most grateful delights. Here the invitation is not, "Come, and buy," lest that should discourage, but, "Come, and eat, come and entertain yourselves with that which will be abundantly pleasing; eat, O friends." It is sad to think that men should need to be courted thus to their own bliss.

[2.] Hereby we secure to ourselves lasting happiness; "*Hear and your soul shall live*, you shall not only be saved from perishing eternally, but you shall be eternally blessed;" for less than that cannot be the life of an immortal soul. The words of Christ are spirit and life, life to spirits, (John vi. 33, 63.) the words of this life, Acts v. 20. On what easy terms is happiness offered to us! It is but "Hear, and you shall live."

[3.] The great God graciously secures all this to us; "Come to me, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, will put myself into covenant relations, and under covenant-engagements to you, and then by settle upon you the sure mercies of David." Note, *First*, If we come to God to serve him, he will covenant with us to do us good, and make us happy; such are his condescension to us and concern for us. *Secondly*, God's covenant with us is an everlasting covenant; its contrivance for everlasting, its continuance to everlasting. *Thirdly*, The benefits of this covenant are mercies suited to our case, who, being miserable, are the proper objects of mercy. They come from God's mercy, and are ordered every way in kindness to us. *Fourthly*, They are the mercies of David, such mercies as God promised to David, (Ps. lxxxix. 28, 29, &c.) which are called the mercies of David his servant, and are appealed to by Solomon, 2 Chron. vi. 42. It shall be a covenant as sure as that with David, Jer. xxxiii. 25, 26. The covenant of royalty was a figure of the covenant of grace, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Or,

rather, by David here, we are to understand the Messiah. Covenant-mercies are all *his* mercies; they are purchased by him, they are promised in him, they are treasured up in his hand, and out of his hand they are dispensed to us. He is the Mediator and Trustee of the covenant; to him this is applied, Acts xiii. 34. They are the *τὰ ἁγία*—the holy things of David; the word used there, and by the LXX. here; for they are confirmed by the holiness of God, (Ps. lxxxix. 35.) and are intended to advance holiness among men. *Lastly*, They are sure mercies; the covenant, being well-ordered in all things, is sure. It is sure in the general proposal of it; God is real and sincere, serious and in earnest, in the offer of these mercies. It is sure in the particular application of it to believers; God's gifts and callings are without repentance; they are the mercies of David, and therefore sure, for in Christ the promises are all yea and amen.

III. Jesus Christ is promised for the making good of all the other promises which we are here invited to accept of, v. 4. He is that David, whose sure mercies are all the blessings and benefits of the covenant are. And God has given him in his purpose and promise, has constituted and appointed him; and in the fulness of time will as surely send him as if he were already come, to be all that to us, which is necessary to our having the benefits of these preparations. He has given him freely; for what more free than a gift? There was nothing in us to merit such a favour, but Christ is the Gift of God. We want one, 1. To attest the truth of the promises which we are invited to take the benefit of; and Christ is given for a Witness that God is willing to receive us into his favour upon gospel-terms, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, that we may venture our souls upon those promises with entire satisfaction. Christ is a faithful Witness, we may take his word; a competent Witness, for he lay in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and was perfectly apprised of the whole matter. Christ as a Prophet, testifies the will of God to the world; and to believe is to receive his testimony. 2. To assist us in closing with the invitation, and coming up to the terms of it; we know not how to find the way to the waters where we are to be supplied, but Christ is given to be a Leader; we know not what to do, that we may be qualified for it, and become sharers in it, but he is given for a Commander, to show us what to do, and enable us to do it. Much difficulty and opposition lie in our way to Christ; we have spiritual enemies to grapple with, but, to animate us for the conflict, we have a good Captain, like Joshua, a Leader and Commander to tread our enemies under our feet, and to put us in possession of the land of promise. Christ is a Commander by his precept, and a Leader by his example; our business is to obey him, and follow him.

IV. The Master of the feast being fixed, it is, next, to be furnished with guests, for the provision shall not be lost, or made in vain, v. 5. 1. The Gentiles shall be called to this feast, shall be invited out of the highways and the hedges; "*Thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not*, that was not formerly called and owned as thy nation, that thou didst not send prophets to as to Israel, the people which God knew above all the families of the earth." The Gentiles shall now be favoured so as they never were before; their knowing God is said to be rather their *being known of God*, Gal. iv. 9. 2. They shall come at the call; *Nations that know not thee, shall run unto thee*; those that had long been far off from Christ, shall be made nigh, that had been running from him, shall run to him, with the greatest speed and alacrity imaginable. There shall be a concourse of believing Gentiles to Christ, who, being lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to

him. Now see the reason, (1.) Why the Gentiles will thus flock to Christ; it is because of the Lord his God, because he is the Son of God, and is declared to be so with power; because they now see his God is one with whom they have to do, and there is no coming to him as their God but by making an interest in his Son. Those that are brought to be acquainted with God, and understand how the concern lies between them and him, cannot but run to Jesus Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, and there is no coming to God but by him. (2.) Why God will bring them to him; because he is the Holy One of Israel, true to his promises, and he has promised to glorify him, by giving him the heathen for his inheritance. When Greeks began to inquire after Christ, he said, *The hour is come, that the Son of man shall be glorified*, John xii. 22, 23. And his being glorified in his resurrection and ascension, was the great argument by which multitudes were wrought upon to run to him.

6. Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. 7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. 10. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow, from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; 11. So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. 12. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. 13. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the LORD for a name, and for an everlasting sign, that shall not be cut off.

We have here a further account of that covenant of grace which is made with us in Jesus Christ, both what is required, and what is promised, in the covenant, and those considerations that are sufficient abundantly to confirm our believing compliance with, and reliance on, that covenant. This gracious discovery of God's good-will to the children of men, is not to be confined either to the Jew or to the Gentile, to the Old Testament or to the New, much less to the captives in Babylon. No, both the precepts and the promises here are given to all, to every one that *thirsts after happiness*, v. 1. And who does not? Hear this and live.

I. Here is a gracious offer made of pardon, and peace, and all happiness, to poor sinners, upon gospel-terms, v. 6, 7.

1. Let them pray, and their prayers shall be heard

and answered; (v. 6.) "*Seek the Lord while he may be found.* Seek him whom you have left by revolting from your allegiance to him, and whom you have lost by provoking him to withdraw his favour from you. *Call upon him now while he is near, and within call.*" Observe here, (1.) The duties required. [1.] "Seek the Lord; seek to him, and inquire of him, as your Oracle; *ask the law at his mouth, What wilt thou have me to do?* Seek for him, and inquire after him, as your Portion and Happiness; seek to be reconciled to him, and acquainted with him, and to be happy in his favour. Be sorry that you have lost him, be solicitous to find him; take the appointed method of finding him, making use of Christ as your Way, the Spirit as your Guide, and the word as your rule." [2.] "Call upon him; pray to him to be reconciled, and, being reconciled, pray to him for every thing else you have need of." (2.) The motives made use of to press these duties upon us; *While he may be found—while he is near.* [1.] It is implied that now God is near, and will be found, so that it shall not be in vain to seek him, and to call upon him: now his patience is waiting on us, his word is calling to us, and his Spirit striving with us: let us now improve our advantages and opportunities, for now is the accepted time. But, [2.] There is a day coming when he will be afar off, and will not be found; when the day of his patience is over, and his Spirit will strive no more. There may come such a time in this life, when the heart is incurably hardened; it is certain that at death and judgment the door will be shut, Luke xvi. 26.—xiii. 25, 26. Mercy is now offered, but then judgment without mercy will take place.

2. Let them repent and reform, and their sins shall be pardoned, v. 7. Here is a call to the unconverted, to the wicked and the unrighteous; to the wicked, who live in known gross sins, to the unrighteous, who live in the neglect of plain duties: to them is the word of this salvation sent, and all assurance given, that penitent sinners shall find God a pardoning God. Observe here, (1.) What it is to repent. There are two things in it; [1.] It is to turn from sin, it is to forsake it; it is to leave it, and to leave it with loathing and abhorrence, never to return to it again. The wicked must forsake his way, his evil way, as one would forsake a false way that will never bring us to the happiness we aim at, and a dangerous way, that leads to destruction. Let him not take one step more in that way. Nay, there must be not only a change of the way, but a change of the mind; the unrighteous must forsake his thoughts. Repentance, if it be true, strikes at the root, and washes the heart from wickedness. We must alter our judgments concerning persons and things, dislodge the corrupt imaginations, and quit the vain pretences which an unsanctified heart shelters itself under. Note, It is not enough to break off from evil practices, but we must enter a caveat against evil thoughts. Yet this is not all; [2.] To repent is to return to the Lord; to return to him as our God, our sovereign Lord, against whom we have rebelled, and to whom we are concerned to reconcile ourselves; it is to return to the Lord as the Fountain of life and living waters, which we had forsaken for broken cisterns. (2.) What encouragement we have thus to repent. If we do so, [1.] God will have mercy; he will not deal with us as our sins have deserved, but will have compassion on us. Misery is the object of mercy. Now both the consequences of sin, by which we are become *truly miserable*, (Ezek. xvi. 5, 6.) and the nature of repentance, by whom we are made sensible of our misery, and are brought to *bemoan ourselves*, (Jer. xxxi. 18.) both these make us objects of pity, and with God there are tender mercies. [2.] He will abundantly pardon. *He will multiply to pardon.*

(so the word is,) as we have multiplied to offend. Though our sins have been very great, and very many, and though we have often backslidden, and are still prone to offend, yet God will repeat his pardon, and welcome even backsliding children that return to him in sincerity.

11. Here are encouragements given us to accept this offer, and to venture ourselves upon it. For look which way we will, we find enough to confirm us in our belief of its validity and value.

1. If we look up to heaven, we find God's counsels there high and transcendent; his thoughts and ways infinitely above ours, *v. 8, 9*. The wicked are bid to forsake their *evil ways and thoughts*, (*v. 7*.) and to return to God, to bring their ways and thoughts to concur and comply with his; "For" (says he) "my thoughts and ways are not as yours; yours are conversant only about things beneath, they are of the earth, earthy; but mine are above, as the heaven is high above the earth; and if you would approve yourselves true penitents, yours must be so too, and your affections must be set on things above." Or, rather, it is to be understood as an encouragement to us to depend upon God's promise to pardon sin, upon repentance. Sinners may be ready to fear that God will not be reconciled to them, because they could not find in their hearts to be reconciled to one, who should have so basely and so frequently offended them. "But" (says God) "my thoughts in this matter are not as yours, but as far above them as heaven is above the earth." They are so in other things; men's sentiments concerning sin, and Christ, and holiness, concerning this world and the other, are vastly different from God's; but in nothing more than in the matter of reconciliation. We think God apt to take offence, and backward to forgive; that if he forgives once, he will not forgive a second time. Peter thought it a great deal to *forgive seven times*; (*Matth. xviii. 21*.) and a hundred pence go far with us; but God meets returning sinners with pardoning mercy; he forgives freely, and, as he gives, it is without upbraiding. We forgive, and cannot forget; but when God forgives sin, he remembers it no more. Thus God invites sinners to return to him, by possessing them with *good thoughts of him*, as *Jer. xxxi. 20*.

2. If we look down to this earth, we find God's word there powerful and effectual, and answering all its great intentions, *v. 10, 11*. Observe here,

(1.) The efficacy of God's word in the kingdom of nature; *He saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth*; he appoints when it shall come, to what degree, and how long it shall lie there; he saith so to the *small rain and the great rain of his strength*, *Job xxxvii. 6*. And according to his order they come down from heaven, and do *whatsoever he commands them upon the face of the world, whether it be for correction, or for his land, or for mercy*, *v. 12, 13*. It returns not *reinfected*—without having accomplished something, but waters the earth, which he is therefore said to do *from his chambers*, *Ps. civ. 13*. And the watering of the earth is in order to its fruitfulness; thus he makes it to bring forth bud, for the products of the earth depend upon the dews of heaven; and thus it gives not only bread to the eater, presents maintenance to the owner and his family, but seed likewise to the sower, that he may have food for another year. The husbandman must be a sower as well as an eater, else he will soon see the end of what he has.

(2) The efficacy of his word in the kingdom of providence and grace, which is as certain as the former; "So shall my word be, as powerful in the mouth of prophets as it is in the hand of Providence; it shall not return unto me void, as unable to effect what it was sent for, or meeting with an insuperable opposition; no, it shall accomplish that

which I please," (for it is the declaration of his will, according to the counsel of which he works all things,) "and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." This assures us, [1.] That the promises of God shall all have their full accomplishment in due time, and not one iota or tittle of them shall fail, *1 Kings viii. 56*. These promises of mercy and grace shall have as real an effect upon the souls of believers, for their sanctification and comfort, as ever the rain had upon the earth, to make it fruitful. [2.] That according to the different errands on which the word is sent, it will have its different effects; if it be not a savour of life unto life, it will be a savour of death unto death; if it do not convince the conscience, and soften the heart, it will sear the conscience, and harden the heart; if it do not ripen for heaven, it will ripen for hell. See *ch. vi. 9*. One way or other, it will take effect. [3.] That Christ's coming into the world, as the dew from heaven, (*Hos. xiv. 5*.) will not be in vain. For if Israel be not gathered, he will be glorious in the conversion of the Gentiles; to them therefore tenders of grace must be made when the Jews refuse them, that the wedding may be furnished with guests, and the gospel not return void.

3. If we take a special view of the church, we shall find what great things God has done, and will do, for it; (*v. 12, 13*.) *Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace*. This refers, (1.) To the deliverance and return of the Jews out of Babylon. They shall go out of their captivity, and be led forth toward their own land again. God will go before them as surely, though not as sensibly, as before their fathers in the pillar of cloud and fire. They shall go out, not with trembling, but with triumph; not with any regret to part with Babylon, or any fear of being fetched back, but with joy and peace. Their journey home over the mountains shall be pleasant, and they shall have the good will and good wishes of all the countries they pass through. The hills and their inhabitants shall, as in a transport of joy, break forth into singing; and if the people should altogether hold their peace, even the trees of the field would attend them with their applauses and acclamations. And when they come to their own land, it shall be ready to bid them welcome; for whereas they expected to find it all overgrown with briars and thorns, it shall be set with fir-trees, and myrtle-trees; for though it lay desolate, yet it *enjoyed its sabbaths*, (*Lev. xxvi. 34*.) which, when they were over, like the land after the sabbatical year, it was the better for. And this shall redound much to the honour of God, and be to him for a name. But, (2.) Without doubt it looks further; this shall be *for an everlasting sign*. That is, [1.] The redemption of the Jews out of Babylon shall be a ratification of those promises that relate to gospel-times. The accomplishment of the predictions relating to that great deliverance, would be a pledge and earnest of the performance of all the other promises, for thereby it shall appear that he is faithful, who has promised. [2.] It shall be a representation of the blessings promised, and a type and figure of them. *First*, Gospel-grace will set those at liberty, that were in bondage to sin and Satan. They shall go out, and be led forth; Christ shall make them free, and then they shall be free indeed. *Secondly*, It will fill those with joy, that were melancholy, *Ps. xiv. 7. Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad*. The earth and the inferior part of the creation shall share in the joy of this salvation, *Ps. xcvi. 11, 12. Thirdly*, It will make a great change in men's characters. Those that were as thorns and briars, good for nothing but the fire, nay, hurtful and vexatious, shall become graceful and useful as the fir-tree and the myrtle-tree. Thorns and briars came in with sin, and were the

fruits of the curse, Gen. iii. 18. The raising of pleasant trees in the room of them signifies the removal of the curse of the law and the introduction of gospel blessings. The church's enemies were as thorns and briers; but, instead of them, God will raise up friends to be her protection and ornament. Or it may denote the world's growing better; instead of a generation of thorns and briers, there shall come up a generation of fir-trees and myrtles; the children shall be wiser and better than the parents. And, *fourthly*, in all this God shall be glorified. It shall be to him for a name, by which he will be made known and praised, and by it the people of God shall be encouraged. It shall be for an everlasting sign of God's favour to them, assuring them that, though it may for a time be clouded, it shall never *be cut off*. The covenant of grace is an everlasting covenant; for the present blessings of it are signs of everlasting ones.

## IS A I A H.

### CHAP. LVI.

After the exceedingly great and precious promises of gospel grace, typified by temporal deliverances, which we had in the foregoing chapter, we have here, I. A solemn charge given to us all to make conscience of our duty, as we hope to have the benefit of those promises, ver. 1, 2. II. Great encouragement given to strangers that were willing to come under the bonds of the covenant, assuring them of the blessings of the covenant, ver. 3-8. III. A high charge drawn up against the watchmen of Israel, that were careless and unfaithful in the discharge of their duty (ver. 9-12), which seems to be the beginning of a new sermon, by way of reproof and threatening, which is continued in the following chapters. And the word of God was intended for conviction, as well as for comfort and instruction in righteousness.

**Evangelical Promises; Exhortations to Duty. (b. c. 706.)**

**1 Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. 2 Blessed is the man *that* doeth this, and the son of man *that* layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.**

The scope of these verses is to show that when God is coming towards us in a way of mercy we must go forth to meet him in a way of duty.

I. God here tells us what are his intentions of mercy to us (v. 1): *My salvation is near to come*—the great salvation wrought out by Jesus Christ (for that was the salvation of which the *prophets enquired and searched diligently*, 1 Pet. i. 10), typified by the salvation of the Jews from Sennacherib or out of Babylon. Observe, 1. The gospel salvation is the salvation of the Lord. It was contrived and brought about by him; he glories in it as his. 2. In that salvation God's righteousness is revealed, which is so much the beauty of the gospel that St. Paul makes this the

ground of his glorying in it. (Rom. i. 17), *because therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith*. The law revealed that righteousness of God by which all sinners stand condemned, but the gospel reveals that by which all believers stand acquitted. 3. The Old-Testament saints saw this salvation coming, and drawing near to them, long before it came; and they had notice by the prophets of its approach. As Daniel understood by Jeremiah's books the approach of the redemption out of Babylon, at the end of seventy years, so others understood by Daniel's books the approach of our redemption by Christ at the end of seventy weeks of years.

II. He tells us what are his expectations of duty from us, in consideration thereof. Say not, "We see the salvation near, and therefore we may live as we list, for there is no danger now of missing it or coming short of it;" that is turning the grace of God into wantonness. But, on the contrary, when the salvation is near double your guard against sin. Note, The fuller assurances God gives us of the performance of his promises the stronger obligations he lays us under to obedience. The salvation here spoken of has now come; yet, there being still a further salvation in view, the apostle presses duty upon us Christians with the same argument. Rom. iii. 11, *Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed*. That which is here required to qualify and prepare us for the approaching salvation is,

1. That we be honest and just in all our dealings: *Keep you judgment and do justice*. Walk by rule, and make conscience of what you say and do, that you do no wrong to any. Render to all their dues exactly, and, in exacting what is due to you, keep up a court of equity in your own bosom, to moderate the rigours of the law. Be ruled by that golden rule, "Do as you would be done by." Magistrates must administer justice wisely and faithfully. This is required to evidence the sincerity of our faith and repentance, and to open the way of mercy. *Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. God is true to us; let us be so to one another.

2. That we religiously observe the sabbath day, v. 2. We are not just if we rob God of his time. Sabbath-sanctification is here put for all the duties of the first table, the fruits of our love to God, as justice and judgment are put for all those of the second table, the fruits of our love to our neighbour. Observe, (1.) The duty required, which is to *keep the sabbath*, to keep it as a talent we are to trade with, as a treasure we are entrusted with. "Keep it holy; keep it safe; keep it with care and caution; keep it from polluting it. Allow neither yourselves nor others either to violate the holy rest or omit the holy work of that day." If this be intended primarily for the Jews in Babylon, it was fit that they should be particularly put in mind of this, because when, by reason of their distance from the temple, they could not observe the other institutions of their law, yet they might distinguish themselves from the heathen by putting a difference between God's day and other days. But it being required more generally of man, and *the son of man*, it intimates that sabbath-sanctification should be a duty in gospel times, when the bounds of the church should be enlarged and other rites and ceremonies abolished. Observe, Those that would keep the sabbath from polluting it must put on resolution, must not only do this, but lay hold on it, for sabbath time is precious, but is very apt to slip away if we take not great care; and therefore we must lay hold on it and keep our hold, must do it and persevere in it. (2.) The encouragement we have to do this duty: *Blessed is he that doeth*

*it.* The way to have the blessing of God upon our employments all the week is to make conscience, and make a business, of sabbath-sanctification; and in doing so we shall be the better qualified to do judgment and justice. The more godliness the more honesty, 1 Tim. ii. 2.

3. That we have nothing to do with sin: *Blessed is the man that keeps his hand from doing evil*, any wrong to his neighbour, in body, goods, or good name—or, more generally, any thing that is displeasing to God and hurtful to his own soul. Note, The best evidence of our having kept the sabbath well will be a care to keep a good conscience all the week. By this it will appear that we have been in the mount with God if our faces shine in a holy conversation before men.

**Encouragement to the Sincere; Encouragement to the Gentiles. (b. c. 706.)**

**3 Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. 4 For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; 5 Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. 6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; 7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. 8 The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.**

The prophet is here, in God's name, encouraging those that were hearty in joining themselves to God and yet laboured under great discouragements. 1. Some were discouraged because they were not of the seed of Abraham. They had *joined themselves to the Lord*, and bound their souls with a bond to be his for ever (this is the root and life of religion, to break off from the world and the flesh, and devote ourselves entirely to the service and honour of God); but they questioned whether God would accept them, because they were of *the sons of the stranger*, v. 3. They were Gentiles, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel and aliens from the covenants of promise, and therefore feared they had no part nor lot in the matter. They said, "*The Lord has utterly separated me from his people*, and will not own me as one of them, nor admit me to their privileges." It was often said that there should be *one law for the stranger and for him that was born in the land* (Exod. xii. 49), and yet they came to this melancholy conclusion. Note, Unbelief often suggests things to the discouragement of good people which are directly contrary to what God himself has said, things which he has expressly guarded against. Let not the *sons of the stranger* therefore say thus, for they have no reason to say it. Note, Ministers must have answers ready for the disquieting fears and jealousies of weak Christians, which, how unreasonable soever, they must take notice of. 2. Others were discouraged because they were not fathers in Israel. The eunuch said, *Behold, I am a dry tree*. So he looked upon himself, and it was his grief; so others looked upon him, and it was his reproach. He was thought to be of no use because he had no children, nor was ever likely to have any. This



was then the more grievous because eunuchs were not admitted to be priests (Lev. xxi. 20), nor to *enter into the congregation* (Deut. xxiii. 1), and because the promise of a numerous posterity was the particular blessing of Israel and the more valuable because from among them the Messiah was to come. Yet God would not have the eunuchs to make the worst of their case, nor to think that they should be excluded from the gospel church, and from being spiritual priests, because they were shut out from the congregation of Israel and the Levitical priesthood; no, as the taking down of the partition wall, contained in ordinances, admitted the Gentiles, so it let in likewise those that had been kept out by ceremonial pollutions. Yet, by the reply here given to this suggestion, it should seem the chief thing which the eunuch laments in his case is his being written childless.

Now suitable encouragements are given to each of these.

I. To those who have no children of their own, who, though they had the honour to be the children of the church and the covenant themselves, yet had none to whom they might transmit that honour, none to receive the sign of circumcision and the privileges secured by that sign. Now observe,

1. What a good character they have, though they lie under this ignominy and affliction; and those only are entitled to the following comforts who in some measure answer to these characters. (1.) They *keep God's sabbaths* as he has appointed them to be kept. In the primitive times, if a Christian were asked, "Hast thou kept holy the Lord's day?" He would readily answer, "I am a Christian, and dare not do otherwise." (2.) In their whole conversation they *choose those things that please God*. They do that which is good; they do it with a sincere design to please God in it; they do it of choice, and with delight. If sometimes, through infirmity, they come short in doing that which pleases God, yet they choose it, they endeavour after it, and aim at it. Note, Whatever is God's pleasure should without dispute be our choice. (3.) They *take hold of his covenant*, and that is a thing that pleases God as much as any thing. The covenant of grace is proposed and proffered to us in the gospel; to take hold of it is to consent to it, to accept the offer and come up to the terms, deliberately and sincerely to take God to be to us a God and to give up ourselves to him to be to him a people. Taking hold of the covenant denotes an entire and resolute consent to it, taking hold as those that are afraid of coming short, catching at it as a good bargain, and as those that are resolved never to let it go, for it is our life: and we take hold of it as a criminal took hold of the horns of the altar to which he fled for refuge.

2. What a great deal of comfort they may have if they answer to this character, though they are not built up into families (v. 5): *Unto them will I give a better place and name*. It is supposed that there is a place and a name, which we have from sons and daughters, that is valuable and desirable. It is a pleasing notion we have that we live in our children when we are dead. But there is a better place, and a better name, which those have that are in covenant with God, and it is sufficient to counterbalance the want of the former. A place and a name denote rest and reputation; a place to live comfortably in themselves, and a name to live creditably with among their neighbours; they shall be happy, and may be easy both at home and abroad. Though they have not children to be the music of their house, or arrows in their quiver, to keep them in countenance when they speak

with their enemies in the gate, yet they shall have a place and a name more than equivalent. For, (1.) God will give it to them, will give it to them by promise; he will himself be both their habitation and their glory, their place and their name. (2.) He will give it to them in his house, and within his walls; there they shall have a place, shall be planted so as to take root (Ps. xcii. 13), shall *dwell all the days of their life*, Ps. xxvii. 4. They shall be at home in communion with God, as Anna, that *departed not from the temple night nor day*. There they shall have a name. A name for the good things with God and

Pages 258-259  
missing

good people, which is a name *better than that of sons and daughters*. Our relation to God, our interest in Christ, our title to the blessings of the covenant, and our hopes of eternal life, are things that give us in God's house a blessed place and a blessed name. [3.] It shall be an everlasting name, that shall never be extinct, shall never be cut off; like the place and name of angels, who *therefore* marry not, because they die not. Spiritual blessings are unspeakably better than those of sons and daughters; for children are a certain care, and may prove the greatest grief and shame of a man's life, but the blessings we partake of in God's house, are a sure and constant joy and honour, comforts which cannot be imbibtered.

2. To those that are themselves the children of strangers,

(1.) It is here promised, that they shall now be welcome to the church, *v. 6, 7*. When God's Israel come out of Babylon, let them bring as many of their neighbours along with them as they can persuade to come, and God will find room enough for them all in his house.

And here (as before) we may observe,

[1.] Upon what terms they shall be welcome; let them know that God's Israel, when they come out of Babylon, will not be plagued, as they were when they came out of Egypt, with a mixed multitude, that went with them, but were not cordially for them; no, the sons of the stranger shall have a place and a name in God's house, provided, *First*, That they forsake other gods, all rivals and pretenders whatsoever, and *join themselves to the Lord*, so as to become *one spirit*, 1 Cor. vi. 17. *Secondly*, That they join themselves to him as subjects to their prince, and soldiers to their general, by an oath of fidelity and obedience, to serve him, not occasionally, as one would serve a turn, but to be constantly his servants, entirely subject to his command, and devoted to his interest. *Thirdly*, That they join themselves to him as friends to his honour and the interests of his kingdom in the world, to love the name of the Lord, to be well-pleased with all the discoveries he has made of himself, and all the memorials they make of him. Observe, Serving him and loving him go together, for those that love him truly will serve him faithfully, and that obedience is most acceptable to him, as well as most pleasant to us, which flows from a principle of love, for then *his commandments are not grievous*, 1 John v. 3. *Fourthly*, That they keep the sabbath from polluting it; for the stranger that is within thy gates, is particularly required to do that. *Lastly*, That they take hold of the covenant, that they come under the bonds of it, and put in for the benefits of it.

[2.] To what privileges they shall be welcome,

7. Three things are here promised them in their coming to God. *First*, Assistance; "I will bring them to my holy mountain, not only bid them welcome, when they come, but incline them to come, will show them the way, and lead them in it." David himself prays, that God by his *light and truth* would bring them to his *holy hill*, Ps. xliii. 3. And the sons of the stranger shall be under the same guidance. The church is God's holy hill, on which he hath set his King, and in bringing them to Zion-hill, he brings them to be subjects to Zion's King, as well as worshippers in Zion's holy temple. *Secondly*, Acceptance; "Their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted on mine altar, and be never the less acceptable for being theirs, though they are sons of the stranger." The prayers and praises (those spiritual sacrifices) of devout Gentiles shall be as pleasing to God as those of the pious Jews, and no difference shall be made between them; for though they are Gentiles by birth, yet

through grace they shall be looked upon as the believing seed of faithful Abraham, and the praying seed of wrestling Jacob, for in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision. *Thirdly*, Comforts; they shall not only be accepted, but they themselves shall have the pleasure of it; *I will make them joyful in my house of prayer*. They shall have grace, not only to serve God, but to serve him cheerfully and with gladness, and that shall make the service the more acceptable to him; for when we sing in the ways of the Lord, then great is the glory of our God. They shall go away, and *eat their bread with joy*, because *God now accepts their works*, Eccl. ix. 7. Nay, though they come mourning to the house of prayer, they shall go away rejoicing, for they shall there find such ease, by casting their cares and burdens upon God, and referring themselves to him, that, like Hannah, they shall go away, and their countenance shall be no more sad. Many a sorrowful spirit has been made joyful in the house of prayer.

(2.) It is here promised, that multitudes of the Gentiles shall come to the church; not only that the few who come dropping in, shall be bid welcome, but that great numbers shall come in, and the door be thrown open to them; *My house shall be called an house of prayer for all people*. The temple was then God's house, and to that Christ applies these words; (Matth. xxi. 13.) but with an eye to it as a type of the gospel-church, Heb. ix. 8; 9. For Christ calls it *his house*, Heb. iii. 6. Now concerning this house, it is promised, [1.] That it shall not be a house of sacrifice, but a house of prayer. The religious meetings of God's people shall be meetings for prayer, in which they shall join together, as a token of their united faith and mutual love. [2.] That it shall be a house of prayer, not for the people of the Jews only, but for all people. This was fulfilled when Peter was made, not only to perceive it himself, but to tell it to the world, that in *every nation, he that fears God and works righteousness, is accepted of him*, Acts x. 35. It had been declared again and again, that *the stranger that comes nigh shall be put to death*, but Gentiles shall now be looked upon no longer as strangers and foreigners, Eph. ii. 19. And it appears by Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, both that it was primarily intended for a house of prayer, and that strangers should be welcome to it, 1 Kings viii. 30, 41, 43.

And it is intimated here, (v. 8.) that when the Gentiles are called in, they shall be incorporated into one body with the Jews, that (as Christ says, John x. 16.) there may be *one fold and one Shepherd*; for, *First*, God will gather the outcasts of Israel; many of the Jews that had by their unbelief cast themselves out, shall by faith be brought in again, *a remnant according to the election of grace*, Rom. xi. 5. Christ came to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, (Matth. xv. 24.) to *gather their outcasts*, (Ps. cxlvii. 2.) to *restore their preserved*, (ch. xlix. 6.) and to be their *Glory*, Luke ii. 32. *Secondly*, He will gather others also to him, beside his own outcasts that are gathered to him; or though some of the Gentiles have come over and then into the church, that shall not serve (as some may think) to answer the extent of these promises, no, there are still more and more to be brought in; *I will gather others to him beside these*; these are but the first-fruits, in comparison with the harvest that shall be gathered for Christ in the nations of the earth, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in. Note, The church is a growing body: when some are gathered to it, we may hope there shall be still more, till the mystical body be completed: *Other sheep I have*.

9. All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, *yea*, all ye beasts in the forest. 10. His watchmen *are* blind; they are all ignorant, they *are* all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. 11. *Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand*; they all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter. 12. Come ye, *say they*, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as to-day, *and much more abundant*.

From words of comfort the prophet here, by a very sudden change of his style, passes to words of reproof and conviction, and goes on in that strain, for the most part, in the three following chapters; and therefore some here begin a new sermon. He had assured the people, that in due time God would deliver them out of captivity, which was designed for the comfort of those that should live when God would do this. Now here he shows what their sins and provocations were, for which God would send them into captivity, and this was designed for the conviction of those that lived in his own time, near a hundred years before the captivity, who were now filling up the measure of the nation's sin, and to justify God in what he brought upon them. God will lay them waste by the fierceness of their enemies, for the falseness of their friends.

I. Desolating judgments are here summoned, *v. 9*. The sheep of God's pasture are now to be made the sheep of his slaughter, to fall as victims to his justice, and therefore the beasts of the field and the forest are called to come and devour. They are beasts of prey, and do it from their own ravenous disposition; but God permits them to do it, nay, he employs them as his servants in doing it, the ministers of his justice, though they mean not so, neither does their heart think so. If this refers primarily to the descent made upon them by the Babylonians, and their devouring of them, yet it may look further, to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, after these outcasts of them (mentioned *v. 8*.) were gathered into the Christian church. The Roman armies came upon them as beasts of the forest to devour them, and they quite took away their place and nation. Note, When God has bloody work to do, he has beasts of prey within call, to be employed in doing it.

II. The reason of these judgments is here given. The shepherds who should have been the watchmen of the flock, to discover the approaches of the beasts of prey, to keep them off, and protect the sheep, were treacherous and careless, minded not their business, nor made any conscience of the trust reposed in them, and so the sheep became an easy prey to the wild beasts. Now this may refer to the false prophets that lived in Isaiah's, Jeremiah's, and Ezekiel's time, that flattered the people in their wicked ways, and told them they should have peace, though they went on: it may also refer to the priests that bare rule by their means, or to the wicked princes, the sons of Josiah, that *did evil in the sight of the Lord*, and other wicked magistrates under them, that betrayed their trust, were vicious and profane, and, instead of making up the breach of which the judgments of God were breaking in upon them, made it wider, and augmented the fierce anger of the Lord instead of doing any thing to turn it away. They should have kept judgment and justice, (*v. 1*.) but they abandoned both, *Jer. v. 1*. Or, it may refer to those who were

the nation's watchmen in our Saviour's time, the chief priests and the scribes who should have discerned the signs of the times, and have given notice to the people of the approach of the Messiah, but who, instead of that, opposed him, and did all they could to keep people from coming to the knowledge of him, and to prejudice them against him.

It is a very sad character that is here given of these watchmen; *wo unto thee, O land*, when thy guides are such.

1. They had no sense or knowledge of their business; they were wretchedly ignorant of their work, and very unfit to teach, being so ill-taught themselves. His watchmen are *blind*, and therefore utterly unfit to be watchmen. If the seers see not, who shall see for us? *If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!* Christ describes the Pharisees to be *blind leaders of the blind*, *Matth. xv. 14*. The beasts of the field come to devour, and the watchmen are blind, and are not aware of them. They are *all ignorant*, (*v. 10*.) *shepherds that cannot understand*, (*v. 11*.) that know not what is to be done about the sheep, nor can feed them with understanding, *Jer. iii. 15*.

2. What little knowledge they had, they made no use of it, no one was the better for it. As they were *blind watchmen*, that could not discern the danger, so they were *dumb dogs*, that would not give warning of it. And why are the dogs set to guard the sheep, if they cannot bark to awaken the shepherd, and frighten the wolf? Such were these; they that had the charge of souls never reproved men for their faults, nor told them what would be in the end thereof, never gave them notice of the judgments of God that were breaking in upon them; they barked at God's prophets, and bit them too, and worried the sheep, but made no opposition to the wolf or thief.

3. They were very lazy, and would take no pains; they loved their ease, and hated business, were always sleeping, lying down, and loving to slumber. They were not overcome, and overpowered by sleep, as the disciples, through grief and fatigue, but they lay down on purpose to invite sleep; and said, *Soul, take thine ease. Yet a little sleep*. It is bad with a people when their shepherds slumber, (*Nah. iii. 18*.) and it is well for God's people, that their Shepherd, the Keeper of Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps.

4. They were very covetous and eager after the world, *greedy dogs, that can never have enough*; if they had ever so much, they would think it too little; they so loved silver as never to be satisfied with silver, *Eccl. v. 10*. All their inquiry is, what they shall get, not what they shall do. Let them have the wages, and they care not whether the work be done or no; they feed not the flock, but fleece it. They are every one looking to his own way, minding his own private interests, and have no regard at all to the public welfare; it was St. Paul's complaint of the watchmen in his time; (*Phil. ii. 21*.) *All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's*. Every one is for propagating his own opinion, advancing his own party, raising his own family, and having every thing to his own mind, while the common concerns of the public are wretchedly neglected and postponed. They look every one to his gain from his quarter, from his end or part of the work, they are for gain from every quarter, *Rem, rem, quocunque modo rem—Money, money, by fair means, or by foul, we must have money*, but especially from their own quarter, where they will be sure to take care that they lose nothing, nor miss any thing that is to be got. If any one put not into their mouths, they not only will do him no service, but they *prepare war against him*, *Micah iii. 5*.

5. They were perfect epicures, given to their pleasures, never so much in their element as in their drunken revels; (v. 12.) *Come ye*, (say they,) *I will fetch wine*; (they have that at command, their cellars are better furnished than their closets;) *and we will fill ourselves*, or be drunk with strong drink. They were often drunk, not overseen, (as we say,) or overtaken, in drink, but designedly. The watchmen did thus invite and encourage one another to drink to excess, or they courted the people to sit and drink with them, and so confirmed them in their wicked ways, and hardened their hearts, whom they should have reprov'd. How could they think it any harm to be drunk, when the watchmen themselves joined with them, and led them to it?

6. They were secure, and confident of the continuance of their prosperity and ease; they said, *"To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant"*; we shall have as much to spend upon our lusts to-morrow, as we have to-day." They had no thought at all of their own frailty and mortality, though they were shortening their days, and hastening their deaths, by their excesses. They had no dread of the judgments of God, though they were daily provoking him, and making themselves liable to his wrath and curse. They never considered the uncertainty of all the delights and enjoyments of sense, how they perish in the using, and pass away with the lusts of them. They resolved to continue in this wicked course, whatever their consciences said to the contrary, to be as merry to-morrow as they are to-day. *But boast not thyself of to-morrow*, when perhaps *this night thy soul shall be required of thee*.

## CHAP. LVII.

The prophet, in this chapter, makes his observations, I. Upon the deaths of good men, comforting those that were taken away in their integrity, and reproving those that did not make a due improvement of such providences, v. 1, 2. II. Upon the gross idolatries and spiritual whoredoms which the Jews were guilty of, and the destroying judgments they were thereby bringing upon themselves, v. 3., 12. III. Upon the gracious returns of God to his people to put an end to their captivity, and re-establish their prosperity, v. 13., 21.

1. **T**HE righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. 2. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, *each one walking in his uprightness*.

The prophet, in the close of the foregoing chapter, had condemned the watchmen for their ignorance and sottishness; here he shows the general stupidity and senselessness of the people likewise; no wonder they were inconsiderate, when their watchmen were so, who should have awakened them to consideration. We may observe here,

1. The providence of God removing good men apace out of this world. The *righteous*, as to this world, perish, they are gone, and their place knows them no more; piety exempts none from the arrests of death, nay, in persecuting times, the most righteous are most exposed to the violences of bloody men. The first that died, died a martyr. Righteousness delivers from the sting of death, but not from the stroke of it. They are said to *perish*, because they are utterly removed from us, and to express the great loss which this world sustains by the removal of them; not that their death is their undoing, but it often proves an undoing to the places where they lived, and were useful. Nay, even

*merciful men* are taken away, those good men that are distinguished from the righteous for whom *some would even dare to die*, Rom. v. 7. Those are often removed, that could be worst spared; the fruitful trees are cut down by death, and the barren left still to cumber the ground. Merciful men are often taken away by the hand of men's malice; many good works they have done, and for some of them they are stoned. Before the captivity in Babylon perhaps there was a more than ordinary mortality of good men, so that there were scarcely any left, Jer. v. 1. The godly ceased, and the faithful failed, Ps. xii. 1.

2. The careless world slighting these providences, and disregarding them—no man lays it to heart, none considers it. There are very few that lament it as a public loss, very few that take notice of it as a public warning. The death of good men is a thing to be laid to heart, and considered, more than common deaths. Serious inquiries ought to be made; Wherefore does God contend with us? What good lessons are to be learned by such providences? What may we do to help to make up the breach, and to fill up the room of those that are removed? God is justly displeased when such events are not laid to heart; when the voice of the rod is not heard, nor the intentions of it answered, much more when it is rejoiced in, as the slaying of the witnesses is, Rev. xi. 10. Some of God's choicest blessings to mankind, being thus easily parted with, are really undervalued; and it is an evidence of very great incogitancy; little children, when they are little, least lament the death of their parents, because they know not what a loss it is to them.

3. The happiness of the righteous in their removal.

(1.) They are taken away from the evil to come, then when it is just coming. [1.] In compassion to them, that they may not *see the evil*, (2 Kings xxii. 20.) nor share in it, nor be in temptation by it. When the deluge is coming, they are called into the ark, and have a hiding-place and rest in heaven, when there was none for them *under heaven*. [2.] In wrath to the world, to punish them for all the injuries they have done to the righteous and merciful ones; these are taken away, that stood in the gap to turn away the judgments of God; and then what can be expected but a deluge of them! It is a sign that God intends war, when he calls home his ambassadors.

(2.) They go to be easy, out of the reach of that evil. The righteous man, who, while he lived, walked in his uprightness, enters, when he dies, into peace, and rests in his bed. Note, [1.] Death is gain, and rest, and bliss, to those only who walked in their uprightness, and who, when they die, can appeal to God concerning it, as Hezekiah, (2 Kings xx. 3.) *Now, Lord, remember it*. [2.] They that practised uprightness and persevered in it to the end, shall find it well with them when they die. Their souls then enter into peace, into the world of peace, where peace is in perfection, and where there is no trouble; *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*. Their bodies rest in their beds. Note, The grave is a bed of rest to all the Lord's people; there they rest from all their labours, Rev. xiv. 13. And the more weary they were, the more welcome will that rest be to them, Job iii. 17. This bed is made in the darkness, but that makes it the more quiet; it is a bed out of which they shall rise refreshed in the morning of the resurrection.

3. But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore. 4. Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide



mouth, and draw out the tongue? are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood, 5. Inflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks? 6. Among the smooth stones of the stream is thy portion; they, they are thy lot; even to them hast thou poured a drink-offering, thou hast offered a meat-offering. Should I receive comfort in these? 7. Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed: even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice. 8. Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance; for thou hast discovered *thyself to another* than me, and art gone up: thou hast enlarged thy bed, and made a covenant with them; thou lovedst their bed where thou sawedst it. 9. And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase *thyself even unto hell*. 10. Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thy hand; therefore thou wast not grieved. 11. And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not? 12. I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee.

We have here a high charge, but a just one, no doubt, drawn up against that wicked generation, out of which God's righteous ones were removed, because the world was not worthy of them. Observe,

I. The general character here given of them, or the name and title by which they stand indicted, v. 3. They are bid to draw near, and hear the charge, are set to the bar and arraigned there as sons of the sorceress, or of a witch, the seed of an adulterer and a whore; they were such themselves, they were strongly inclined to be such, and their ancestors were such before them. Sin is sorcery and adultery, for it is departing from God, and dealing with the devil; and they were children of disobedience; "Come," says the prophet, "draw near hither, and I will read you your doom; to the righteous death will bring peace and rest, but not to you; you are children of transgression, and a seed of falsehood, (v. 4.) that have it by kind, and have it woven into your very nature, to backslide from God, and to deal treacherously with him," (ch. xlviii. 8.)

II. The particular crimes laid to their charge.

1. Scoffing at God and his word. They were a generation of scorers; (v. 4.) "*Against whom do you sport yourselves?*" You think it is only against the poor prophets, whom you trample upon as contemptible men, but really it is against God himself, who sends them, and whose message they deliver." Mocking the messengers of the Lord was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin, for what was done to them God took as done to himself. When they were reprov'd for their sins, and threatened with the judgments of God, they ridiculed the word of God with the rudest and most indecent gestures and expres-

sions of disdain. They sported themselves and made themselves merry with that which should have made them serious, and under which they should have humbled themselves. They made wry mouths at the prophets, and drew out the tongue, contrary to all the laws of good breeding; nor did they treat God's prophets with the common civility with which they would have treated a gentleman's servant that had been sent to them on an errand. Note, Those who mock at God, and bid defiance to his judgments, had best consider who it is toward whom they carry it so insolently.

2. Idolatry. This was that sin which the people of the Jews were most notoriously guilty of before the captivity; but that affliction cured them of it. In Isaiah's time it abounded, witness the abominable idolatries of Ahaz (which some think are particularly referred to here) and of Manasseh. (1.) They were dotingly fond of their idols, were inflamed with them, as those that burn in unlawful, unnatural lusts, Rom. i. 27. They were mad upon their idols, Jer. l. 38. They inflamed themselves with them by their violent passions in the worship of them, as those of Baal's prophets that leaped upon the altar, and cut themselves, 1 Kings xviii. 26, 28. Note, Vile corruptions, the more they are gratified, the more they are inflamed. They worshipped their idols under every green tree, in the open air, and in the shade; yet that did not cool the heat of their impetuous lusts, but, rather, the charming beauty of the green trees made them the more fond of their idols which they worshipped there. Thus that in nature which is pleasing, instead of drawing them to the God of nature, drew them from him. The flame of their zeal in the worship of false gods, may shame us for our coldness and indifference in the worship of the true God. They strove to inflame themselves, but we distract and deaden ourselves. (2.) They were barbarous and unnaturally cruel in the worship of their idols; they slew their children, and offered them in sacrifice to their idols, not only in the valley of the son of Hinnom, the head-quarters of that monstrous idolatry, but in other valleys, in imitation of that, and under the clefts of the rock, in dark and solitary places, the fittest for such works of darkness. (3.) They were abundant and insatiable in their idolatries; they never thought they could have idols enough, nor could spend enough upon them, and do enough in their service. The Syrians had once a notion of the God of Israel, that he was a God of the hills, but not a God of the valleys; (1 Kings xx. 28.) but these idolaters, to make sure work, had both.

[1.] They had gods of the valleys, which they worshipped in the low places by the water side; (v. 6.) *Among the smooth stones of the valley, or brook, is thy portion.* If they saw a smooth carved stone, though set up but for a way-mark, or a mere stone, they were ready to worship it, as the papists do crosses. Or, in stony valleys they set up their gods, which they called their *portion*, and took for their lot, as God's people take him for their Lot and Portion. But these gods of stone would really be no better a portion for them, no better a lot, than the smooth stones of the stream, near which they were set up, for sometimes they worshipped their rivers; "They, they are thy lot which thou trustest to, and art pleased with, but thou shalt be put off with it for thy lot, and miserable will thy case be." See the folly of sinners, who take the smooth stones of the stream for their portion, when they might have the precious stones of God's Jerusalem, and the High Priest's ephod, to portion themselves with. Having taken these idols for their lot and portion, they refuse no charge in doing honour to them; "*To them hast thou poured a drink-offering, and offered a meat-offering,*" as if they had given thee thy meat

and drink." They loved their idols better than their children, for their own tables must be robbed, to replenish the altars of their idols. Have we taken the true God for our Portion? Is he, even he, our Lot? Let us then serve him with our meat and drink, not as they did, by depriving ourselves of the use of them, but by eating and drinking to his glory. Here, in a parenthesis, comes in an expression of God's just resentment of this wickedness of theirs. Should I receive comfort in these—in such a people as this? Can they expect that God would take any pleasure in them, or accept their devotions at his altar, who thus serve Baal with the gifts of his providence? God takes comfort in his people, while they are faithful to him; but what comfort can he take in them, when they that should be his witnesses against the idolatries of the world, do themselves fall in with them? *Should I have compassion on these?* (so some;) *Should I repent me concerning these?* (so others.) "How can they expect that I should spare them, and either adjourn or abate their punishment, when they are so very provoking? *Shall I not visit for these things?*" Jer. v. 7, 9.

[2.] They had gods of the hills too; (v. 7.) "*Upon a lofty and high mountain* (as if thou wouldst vie with the high and lofty One himself, v. 15.) *hast thou set thy bed*, thine idol, thine idol's temple and altar, the bed of thine uncleanness, where thou committest spiritual whoredom, with all the wantonness of an idolatrous fancy, and in direct violation of the covenant of thy God. Thither wentest thou up readily enough, though it was up-hill, to offer sacrifice." Some think this bespeaks the impudence they arrived at in their idolatries; at first they had some sense of shame, when they worshipped their idols in the valleys, in obscure places; but they soon conquered that, and came to do it upon the lofty, high mountains; they were not ashamed, neither could they blush.

[3.] As if these were not enough, they had household-gods too, their *lares* and *penates*. *Behind the doors and the posts*, (v. 8.) where the law of God should be written for a memorandum to them of their duty, they set up the remembrance of their idols, not so much to keep up their own remembrance of them, (they were so fond of them, that they could not forget them,) but to show to others how mindful they were of them, and to put their children in mind of them, and possess them betimes with a veneration for these dunghill-deities.

[4.] As they were insatiable in their idolatries, so they were inseparable from them; they were hardened in their wickedness, they worshipped their idols openly and in public view, as being neither ashamed of the sin, nor afraid of the punishment; they went as publicly, and in as great crowds, to the idol-temples, as ever they had gone to God's house. This was like an impudent harlot, discovering themselves to another, and not to God, making a profession of a false religion, and not of the true. They took a pride in making proselytes to their idolatries, and not only went up themselves to their high places, but enlarged their bed, their idol-temples, and (as the margin reads the following words) *thou hewedst it for thyself larger than theirs*, than theirs from whom thou copiedst it, and tookest the platform of it, as Ahaz of his altar from that which he saw at Damascus, 2 Kings xvi. 10. And being thus involved over head and ears, as it were, in their idolatries, there is no parting them from them. Ephraim is now joined to idols both in love and league. *First*, In league; "*Thou hast made a covenant with them*, with the idols, with the idol-worshippers, to live and die together. This was a complete renunciation of their covenant with God, and an avowed resolution to persist in their apostacy from him. *Secondly*, In love; "*Thou lovedst their bed*, the

temple of an idol, wherever thou sawest it." Justly therefore were they given up to their own hearts' lusts.

3. Another sin charged upon them is, their trusting in, and seeking to, foreign aids and succours, and contracting a communion with the Gentile powers; (v. 9.) *Thou wentest to the king*, which some understand of the idol they worshipped, particularly *Moloch*, which signifies a king; "*Thou didst every thing to ingratiate thyself with those idols*, didst offer incense and sweet ointments at their altars." Or, it may be meant of the king of Assyria, whom Ahaz made his court to; or, of the king of Babylon, whose ambassadors Hezekiah caressed; or, of the other kings of the nations whose idolatrous usages they admired, and were desirous to learn and imitate, and, for that end, went and sent to cultivate an acquaintance and correspondence with them, that they might be like them, and strengthen themselves by an alliance with them. See here, (1.) What an expense they were at in forming and procuring this grand alliance; they went with ointments and perfumes, either bestowed upon themselves, to beautify their own faces, and to make themselves considerable, and worthy the friendship of the greatest king; or, to be presented to those whose favour they were ambitious of, because a man's gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men; "*When the first present of rich perfumes was thought too little*, thou didst increase them;" and thus many seek the ruler's favour, forgetting that, after all, every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord. So fond were they of those heathen princes, that they not only went themselves, in all their airs, to those that were near them, but sent messengers to those that were afar off, ch. xviii. 2. (2.) How much they hereby disparaged themselves, and laid the honour of their crown and nation in the dust; *Thou didst debase thyself even unto hell*. They did so by their idolatries. It is a dishonour to the children of men, who are endued with the powers of reason, to worship that as their god, which is the creature of their own fancy, and the work of their own hands, to bow down to the stock of a tree. It is much more a dishonour to the children of God, who are blessed with the privilege of divine revelation, to forsake such a God as they know theirs to be, for a thing of naught, their own mercies for lying vanities. They likewise debased themselves by truckling to their heathen neighbours, and depending upon them, when they had a God to go to, who is all-sufficient, and in covenant with them. How did they shame themselves to the highest degree, and sink themselves to the lowest, that forsook the Fountain of life for broken cisterns, and the Rock of ages for broken reeds. Note, Sinners disparage and debase themselves; the service of sin is an ignominious slavery; and they who thus debase themselves to hell, will justly have their portion there.

### III. The aggravation of their sin:

1. They had been tired with disappointments in their wicked courses, and yet they would not be convinced of the folly of them; (v. 10.) "*Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way*; thou hast undertaken a mighty task, to find out true satisfaction and happiness in that which is vanity and a lie." Those that set up idols, instead of God, for the object of their worship, and princes, instead of God, for the object of their hope and confidence, and think thus to better themselves, and make themselves easy, go a great way about, and will never come to their journey's end; *Thou art wearied in the multitude, or multiplicity, of thy ways*; so some read it; those that forsake the only right way, wander endlessly in a thousand by-paths, and lose themselves in the many inventions which they have sought out; they weary themselves with fresh chases, and fierce

one, but never gain their point, like the Sodomites, that *wearied themselves to find the door*, (Gen. xix. 11.) and could not find it at last. The pleasures of sin will soon surfeit, but never satisfy; a man may quickly tire himself in the pursuit of them, but can never repose himself in the enjoyment of them. They found this by experience; the idols they had often worshipped never did them any kindness, the kings they courted distressed them, and helped them not; and yet they were so wretchedly besotted, that they could not say, "*There is no hope*; it is in vain any longer to expect that satisfaction in creature-confidences, and in the worship of idols, which we have so often looked for, and never met with." Note, Despair of happiness in the creature, and of satisfaction in the service of sin, is the first step towards a well-grounded hope of happiness in God, and a well-fixed resolution to keep to his service: and those are inexcusable, who have had a sensible conviction of the vanity of the creature, and yet will not be brought to say, "There is no hope to be happy short of the Creator."

2. Though they were convinced that the way they were in was a sinful way, yet, because they had found some present sensual pleasure and worldly profit by it, they could not persuade themselves to be sorry for it; "*Thou hast found the life of thy hand*," (or, *the living of it*;) "thou boastest how fortune smiles upon thee, and therefore thou art not grieved, any more than Ephraim, when he said, (Hos. xii. 8.) *I am become rich, I have found me out substance*." Note, Prosperity in sin is a great bar to conversion from sin. Those that live at ease in their sinful pleasures, and raise estates by their sinful projects, are tempted to think God favours them, and therefore they have nothing to repent of. Some read it ironically, or by way of question, "Thou hast found the life of thy hand, hast found true satisfaction and happiness, no doubt, thou hast; hast thou not? And therefore thou art so far from being grieved, that thou blassest thyself in thine own evil way; but review thy gains once more, and come to a balance of profit and loss, and then say, What fruit hast thou of those things whereof thou art ashamed, and for which *God shall bring thee into judgment*?" Rom. vi. 21.

3. They had dealt very unworthily with God by their sin; for, (1.) It should seem they pretended that the reason why they left God, was, because he was too terrible a majesty for them to deal with, they must have gods that they could be more free and familiar with; "But," says God, "of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied; that thou hast dealt falsely and treacherously with me, and dissembled in thy covenants with me and prayers to me? What did I ever do to frighten thee from me? What occasion have I given thee to think hardly of me, that thou hast gone to seek a kinder master?" (2.) However, it is certain that they had no true reverence of God, nor any awful regard to him. So that question is commonly understood. "Of whom hast thou been afraid, or feared? Of none; for thou hast not feared me whom thou shouldest fear; for thou hast lied to me." Those that dissemble with God, make it to appear they stand in no awe of him. "Thou hast not remembered me, neither what I have said, nor what I have done, neither the promises, nor the threatenings, nor the performances of either; thou hast not laid them to thy heart, as thou wouldest have done, if thou hadst feared me." Note, Those who lay not the word of God and his providences to their hearts, show that they have not the fear of God before their eyes. And multitudes are ruined by fearlessness, forgetfulness, and mere carelessness; they do not aright, nor to good purpose fear any thing, remember any thing, or lay any thing to heart. Nay, (3.) They

were hardened in their sin by the patience and forbearance of God; "*Have not I held my peace of old, and for a long time?*" These things thou hast done, and I kept silence. And therefore, as it follows here, thou fearest me not;" as if because God had spared long, he would never punish, Eccl. viii. 11. Because he kept silence, the sinner thought him altogether such a one as himself, and stood in no awe of him.

Lastly, Here is God's resolution to call them to an account, though he had long borne with them; (v. 12.) *I will declare*; like that, (Ps. l. 21.) "*but I will reprove thee, I will declare thy righteousness*, which thou makest thy boast of, and let the world see, and thyself too, to thy confusion, that it is all a sham, all a cheat, it is not what it pretends to be. When thy righteousness comes to be examined, it will be found unrighteousness; and that there is no sincerity in all thy pretensions. I will declare thy works, what they have been, and what the gain thou pretendest to have gotten by them, and it will appear that at long run they shall not profit thee, nor turn to any account." Note, Sinful works, as they are works of darkness, and there is no reason or righteousness in them, so they are unfruitful works, and there is nothing got by them; and however they look now, it will be made to appear so another day. Sin profits not, nay, it ruins and destroys.

13. When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee: but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take *them*: but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain; 14. And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people. 15. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*: with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. 16. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls *which* I have made.

Here,

I. God shows how insufficient idols and creatures were to relieve and succour those that worshipped them, and confided in them; (v. 13.) "*When thou criest in thy distress and anguish, lamentest thy misery, and callest for help, let thy companies deliver thee*, thy idol-gods which thou hast heaped to thyself companies of, the troops of the confederate forces which thou hast relied so much upon, let them deliver thee if they can; expect no other relief than what they can give." Thus God said to Israel, when in their trouble they called upon him, (Judg. x. 14.) *Go, and cry to the gods which you have chosen, let them deliver you*. But in vain is salvation hoped for from them, the wind shall carry them all away, the wind of God's wrath, the breath of his mouth, which shall slay the wicked; they have made themselves as chaff, and therefore the wind will of course hurry them away. Vanity they are, and vanity shall take them away, to vanity they shall be reduced, and vanity shall be their recompense. Both the idols and their worshippers shall come to nothing.

II. He shows that there was a sufficiency, an all-sufficiency, in him for the comfort and deliverance of all those that put their confidence in him, and

made their application to him. Their safety and satisfaction appear the more comfortable, because their hopes are crowned with fruition, when those that seek to other helpers have their hopes frustrated; "He that puts his trust in me, and in me only, he shall be happy, both for soul and body, for this world and the other." 1. They that trust in God's providence take the best course to secure their secular interests; they shall possess the land, as much of it as is good for them, and what they have, they shall have it from a good hand, and hold it by a good title; (Ps. xxxvii. 3.) *They shall dwell in the land, and verily they shall be fed.* 2. They that trust in God's grace take the best course to secure their sacred interests; *They shall inherit my holy mountain.* They shall enjoy the privileges of the church on earth, and be brought at length to the joys of heaven; and no wind shall carry them away. More particularly,

(1.) The captives that trust in God, shall be released; (v. 14.) *They shall say, the messengers of his word, and all the ministers of his providence, in that great event shall say, cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way.* When God's time is come for their deliverance, the way of bringing it about shall be made plain and easy, obstacles shall be removed, difficulties that seemed insuperable shall be speedily got over, and all things shall concur both to accelerate and facilitate their return. See ch. xl. 3, 4. This refers to the provision which the gospel, and the grace of it, have made for our ready passage through this world to a better. The way of religion is now cast up, it is a highway; ministers' business is to direct people in it, and to help them over the discouragements they meet with, that nothing may offend them.

(2.) The contrite, that trust in God, shall be revived, v. 15. They that trusted to idols and creatures for help, went with their *ointments and perfumes*, v. 9. But here God shows that those who may expect help from him, are such as are destitute of, and set themselves at a distance from, the gaieties of the world, and the delights of sense. God's glory appears here very bright,

[1.] In his greatness and majesty; he is *the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity*. Let this possess us with very high and honourable thoughts of the God with whom we have to do. *First*, That his being and perfections are exalted infinitely above every creature, not only above what they have themselves, but above what they can conceive concerning him, *far above all their blessing and praise*, Neh. ix. 5. *He is the high and lofty One*, and there is no creature like him, nor any to be compared with him. It speaks likewise his sovereign dominion over all, and the incontestable right he has to give both law and judgment to all: he is *higher than the highest*, (Eccl. v. 8.) than the *highest heavens*, Ps. cxlii. 4. *Secondly*, That with him there is neither beginning of days, nor end of life, nor change of time; he is both immortal and immutable, he only has *immortality*, 1 Tim. vi. 16. He has it of himself, and he has it constantly, he inhabits it, and cannot be dispossessed of it. We must shortly remove into eternity, but God always inhabits it. *Thirdly*, That there is an infinite rectitude in his nature, an exact conformity with himself, and a steady design of his own glory, in all that he does; and this appears in every thing by which he has made himself known, for his name is *Holy*, and all that desire to be acquainted with him, must know him as a holy God. *Fourthly*, That the peculiar residence and discovery of his glory are in the mansions of light and bliss above; "I dwell in the high and holy place, and will have all the world to know it." Whoever have any business with God must direct to him as their Father in heaven, for there

he dwells. These great things are here said of God, to possess us with a holy reverence of him, to encourage our confidence in him, and to magnify his compassion and condescension to us; that though he is thus high, yet he has respect unto the lowly; he that rides on the heavens by his name *JAH*, stoops to concern himself for poor *widows and fatherless*. Ps. lxxviii. 4, 5.

[2.] In his grace and mercy; he has a tender pity for the humble and contrite, for those that are so in respect of their state; if they be his people, he will not overlook them, though they are poor and low in the world, and despised and trampled upon by men. But it refers to the temper of their mind; he will have a tender regard to those, who, being in affliction, accommodate themselves to their affliction, and bring their mind to their condition, be it ever so low, and ever so sad and sorely broken, those that are truly penitent for sin, and mourn in secret for it, and have a dread of the wrath of God, which they have made themselves obnoxious to, and are submissive under all his rebukes. Now, *First*, With these God will dwell; he will visit them graciously, will converse familiarly with them by his word and spirit, as a man does with those of his own family; he will be always nigh to them, and present with them; he that dwells in the highest heavens, dwells in the lowest hearts, and inhabits sincerity as surely as he inhabits eternity; in these he delights. *Secondly*, He will revive their heart and spirit; will speak that to them, and work that in them, by the word and Spirit of his grace, which will be reviving to them, as a cordial to one that is ready to faint. He will give them reviving joys and hopes, sufficient to balance all the griefs and fears that break their spirits. He dwells with them, and his presence is reviving.

(3.) Those he contends with, if they trust in him, shall be relieved, and received into favour, v. 16. He will revive the heart of the contrite ones, for he will not contend for ever. Nothing makes a soul so contrite as God's contending, and therefore nothing revives it so as his ceasing his controversy. Here is, [1.] A gracious promise. It is not promised that he will never be angry with his people, for their sins are displeasing to him, or that he will never contend with them, for they must expect the rod; but he will not contend for ever, nor be always wroth. As he is not soon angry, so he is not long angry; he will not always chide. Though he contend with them by convictions of sin, he will not contend for ever, but, instead of the spirit of bondage, they shall receive the Spirit of adoption; he has torn, but he will heal: though he contend with them by the rebukes of providence, yet the correction shall not last always, shall not last long, shall last no longer than there is need, (1 Pet. i. 6.) no longer than they can bear, and no longer than till it has done its work. Though their whole life be calamitous, yet their end will be peace; and so will their eternity be. [2.] A very compassionate consideration, upon which this promise is grounded; "If I should contend for ever, the spirit would fail before me, even the souls which I have made." Note, *First*, God is the Father of spirits; (Heb. xii. 9.) it is the soul that he has made, that he gave being to by creation, and a new being to by regeneration. *Secondly*, Though the Lord is for the body, yet he concerns himself chiefly for the souls of his people, that the spirit do not fail, and its graces and comforts. *Thirdly*, When troubles last long, the spirit even of good men is apt to fail; they are tempted to entertain hard thoughts of God, to think it in vain to serve him; they are ready to put comfort away from them, and to despair of relief, and then the spirit fails. *Fourthly*, It is in consideration of this, that God will not contend for ever; for he will not

forsake the work of his own hands, nor defeat the purchase of his Son's blood. The reason is taken not from our merit, but from our weakness and infirmity; *for he remembers that we are flesh*, (Ps. lxxviii. 39.) and the flesh is weak.

17. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. 18. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. 19. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to *him that is far off*, and to *him that is near*, saith the LORD; and I will heal him. 20. But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. 21. *There is no peace*, saith my God, to the wicked.

The body of the people of Israel, in this account of God's dealings with them, is spoken of as a particular person, (v. 17, 18.) but divided into two sorts, differently dealt with; some who were sons of peace, to whom peace is spoken, (v. 19.) and others who were not, who have nothing to do with peace, v. 20, 21. Observe here,

I. The just rebukes which that people were brought under for their sin; *For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him*. Covetousness was a sin that abounded very much among that people; (Jer. vi. 13.) *From the least to the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness*.

Those that did not worship images, were yet carried away by this spiritual idolatry; for covetousness is such, it is making money the god, Col. iii. 5. No marvel that the people were covetous, when their watchmen themselves were notoriously so, *ch. lvi.* 11. Yet, covetous as they were, in the service of their idols they were *prodigal*, v. 6. And it is hard to say, whether their profuseness in that, or their covetousness in every thing else, was more provoking. But for this iniquity, among others, God was angry with them, and brought one judgment after another upon them, and their destruction at last by the Chaldeans. 1. God was wroth; he resented it, took it very ill, that a people who were devoted to himself, and portioned in himself, should be so entirely given up to the world, and choose that for their portion. Note, Covetousness is an iniquity that is very displeasing to the God of heaven. It is heart-sin, but he sees it, and *therefore* hates it, and looks upon it with jealousy, because it sets up a rival with him in the soul. It is a sin which men *bless themselves in*, (Ps. xlix. 18.) and in which their neighbours *bless them*; (Ps. x. 3.) but God abhors it. 2. He smote him, reproved him for it by his prophets, corrected him by his providence, punished him in those very things he so doated upon, and was covetous of. Note, Sinners shall be made to feel from the anger of God; whom he is wroth with he smites; and covetousness particularly lays men under the tokens of God's displeasure. They that set their hearts upon the wealth of this world are disappointed of it, or it is imberbered to them; it is either clogged with a cross, or turned into a curse. 3. God hid himself from him when he was under these rebukes; and continued wroth with him. When we are under the rod, if God manifest himself to us, we may bear it the better; but if he both smite us and hide himself from us, send us no prophets, speak to us no comfortable word, show us no token for good, if he *tear and go away*, (Hos. v. 14.) we are very miserable.

II. Their obstinacy and incorrigibleness under these rebukes; *He went on frowardly in the way of his heart*, in his evil way. He was not sensible of the displeasure of God that he was under; he felt the smart of the rod, but had no regard at all to the hand; the more he was crossed in his worldly pursuits, the more eager he was in them. He either would not see his error, or, if he saw it, would not amend it; covetousness was the way of his heart, it was what he was inclined to, and intent upon, and he would not be reclaimed, but *in his distress he trespassed yet more*, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. See the strength of the corruption of men's hearts, and the sinfulness of sin; it will take its course, in despite of God himself and all the flames of his wrath. See also how insufficient afflictions of themselves are to reform men, unless God's grace work with them.

III. God's wonderful return in mercy to them, notwithstanding the obstinacy of the generality of them. The greater part of them went on frowardly, but there were some among them that were mourners for the obstinacy of the rest; with an eye to them, or rather, for his own name's sake, God determines not to contend for ever with them. *With the froward God may justly show himself froward*, (Ps. xviii. 26.) and *walk contrary* to those that *walk contrary* to him, Lev. xxvi. 24. When this sinner <sup>as</sup> here went on frowardly in the way of his heart, one would think it should have followed, "I have seen his ways, and will destroy him, will abandon him, will never have any thing more to do with him." But such are the riches of divine mercy and grace, and so do they rejoice against judgment, that it follows, *I have seen his ways and will heal him*. See how God's goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious; and where sin has abounded, grace much more abounds. God's reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself, for in us there appears nothing but what is provoking; "I have seen his ways, and yet I will heal him for my own name's sake." God knew how bad the people were, and yet would not cast them off. But observe the method; God will first give him grace, and then, and not till then, give him peace; "I have seen his ways, that he will never turn to me of himself, and therefore I will turn him." Those whom God has mercy in store for, he has grace in readiness for, to prepare and qualify them for that mercy, which they were running from as fast as they could. 1. God will heal him of his corrupt and vicious disposition, will cure him of his covetousness, though it be ever so deeply rooted in him, and his heart have been long exercised to covetous practices. There is no spiritual disease so inveterate, but almighty grace can conquer it. 2. God will lead him also; not only amend what was amiss in him, that he may cease to do evil, but direct him into the way of duty, that he may learn to do well. He goes on frowardly, as Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter, but God will lead him into a better mind, a better path. And then, 3. He will restore those comforts to him, which he had forfeited and lost, and for the return of which he had thus prepared him. There was a wonderful reformation wrought upon the captives in Babylon, and then a wonderful redemption wrought for them, which brought comfort to them, to their mourners, to those among them that mourned for their own sins, the sins of their people, and the desolations of the sanctuary. To those mourners the mercy would be most comfortable, and to them God had an eye in working it out. Blessed are they that mourn, for to them comfort belongs, and they shall have it.

Now, as when that people went into captivity, some of them were good figs, very good, others of them bad figs, very bad, and, accordingly, their

captivity was to them for their good or for *their hurt*, (Jer. xxiv. 8, 9.) so, when they came out of captivity, still some of them were good, others bad, and the deliverance was to them accordingly.

(1.) To those among them that were good, their return out of captivity was peace, such peace as was a type and earnest of the peace which should be preached by Jesus Christ, (v. 19.) *I create the fruit of the lips; peace.* [1.] God designed to give them matter for praise and thanksgiving, for that is the *fruit of the lips*, (Heb. xiii. 15.) the *calves of the lips*, Hos. xiv. 2. *I create this.* Creation is out of nothing, and this is surely out of worse than nothing, when God creates matter of praise for those that went on frowardly in the way of their heart. [2.] In order to this, peace shall be published, *peace, peace*, perfect peace, all kinds of peace, to him that is afar off from the general rendezvous, the head-quarters, as well as to him that is near. Peace with God; though he has contended with them, he will be reconciled, and let fall his controversy; peace of conscience, a holy security, and serenity of mind, after the many reproaches of conscience and tosses of spirit they had been under in their captivity. Thus God creates the fruit of the lips, fresh matter for thanksgiving; for, when he speaks peace to us, we must speak praises to him. This peace is itself of God's creating, he, and he only, can work it; it is the fruit of the lips, of his lips, he commands it; of the minister's lips, he speaks it by them, *ch. xl. 1.* It is the fruit of preaching lips and praying lips; it is the fruit of Christ's lips, whose lips drop as a honey-comb, for to him this is applied, (Eph. ii. 17.) *He came, and preached peace to you who were afar off*, you Gentiles, as well as to the Jews, who were nigh; to after ages, who were afar off in time, as well as to those of the present age.

(2.) To those among them that were wicked, though they might return with the rest, yet to them their return was no peace, *v. 20.* The wicked, wherever he is, in Babylon or in Jerusalem, carries about with him the principle of his own uneasiness, and is like the troubled sea. God healed those to whom he spake peace; (*v. 19.*) *I will heal them*, he shall he well again and set to rights; but the wicked would not be healed by the grace of God, and therefore shall not be healed by his comforts. They are always like the sea in a storm, for they carry about with them, [1.] Unmortified corruptions; those are not cured and conquered, and their ungoverned lusts and passions make them like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, vexatious to all about them, and therefore uneasy to themselves; noisy and dangerous. When the intemperate heats of the spirit break out in scurrilous and abusive language, then the troubled sea casts forth mire and dirt. [2.] Unpacified consciences; they are under a frightful apprehension of guilt and wrath, that they cannot enjoy themselves; when they seem settled, they are in a toss, when they seem merry, they are in heaviness; like Cain, who always dwelt in the land of shaking. The terrors of conscience disturb all their enjoyments, and cast forth such mire and dirt as make them a burthen to themselves. Though this do not appear (it may be) at present, yet it is a certain truth, what this prophet had said before, (*ch. xlviii. 22.*) and here repeats, (*v. 21.*) *There is no peace to the wicked*, no reconciliation to God, nor can they be upon good terms with him while they go on still in their trespasses; no quietness or satisfaction in their own mind, no real good, no peace in death, because no hope. *My God hath said it*, and all the world cannot unsay it, That there is no peace to those that allow themselves any sin. What have they to do with peace?

## CHAP. LVIII.

The prophet, in this chapter, has his commission and charge renewed, to reprove the sinners in Zion, particularly the hypocrites, to show them their transgressions, *v. 1.* It is intended for admonition and warning to all hypocrites, and is not to be confined to those of any one age. Some refer it primarily to those at that time when Isaiah prophesied; see *ch. xxxiii. 14.—xxix. 13.* Others to the captives in Babylon, the wicked among them, to whom the prophet had declared there was no peace, *ch. lvii. 21.* Against the terror of that word they thought to shelter themselves with their external performances, particularly their fastings, which they kept up in Babylon, and for some time after their return to their own land, *Zech. vii. 3, &c.* The prophet therefore here shows them that their devotions would not entitle them to peace, while their conversations were not all of a piece with them. Others think it is principally intended against the hypocrisy of the Jews, especially the Pharisees, before, and in, our Saviour's time; they boasted of their fastings, but Christ (as the prophet here) showed them their transgressions, (*Matth. xxiii.*) much the same with those they are here charged with. Observe, I. The plausible profession of religion which they made, *v. 2.* II. The boasts they made of that profession, and the blame they laid upon God for taking no more notice of it, *v. 3.* III. The sins they are charged with, which spoiled the acceptableness of their fasts, *v. 4, 5.* IV. Instructions given them how to keep fasts aright, *v. 6, 7.* V. Precious promises made to those who do so keep fasts, *v. 8.—12.* VI. The like precious promises made to those that sanctify sabbaths aright, *v. 13, 14.*

1. **C**RY aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. 2. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

When our Lord Jesus promised to send the Comforter, he added, *When he is come, he shall convince;* (John xvi. 7, 8.) for conviction must prepare for comfort, and must also separate between the precious and the vile, and mark out those to whom comfort does not belong. God had appointed this prophet to comfort his people; (*ch. xl. 1.*) here he appoints him to convince them, and show them their sins.

I. He must tell them how very bad they really were, *v. 1.*

1. He must deal faithfully and plainly with them; "Though they are called *the people of God*, and *the house of Jacob*, though they wear an honourable title and character, by which they are interested in many glorious privileges, yet do not flatter them, but show them their transgressions and their sins, be particular in telling them their faults, what sins are committed among them, which they do not know of, nay what sins are committed by them, which they do not acknowledge to be sins; though in some things they are reformed, let them know that in other things they are still as bad as ever. Show them their transgressions and their sins, all their transgressions in their sins, their sins and all the aggravations of them," Lev. xvi. 21. Note, (1.) God sees sin in his people, in the house of Jacob, and is displeased with it. (2.) They are often unapt and unwilling to see their own sins, and need to have them showed them, and to be told, *Thus and thus thou hast done.*

2. He must be vehement and in good earnest herein, *must cry aloud, and not spare*; not spare them, nor touch them with his reproofs, as if he were afraid of hurting them, but search the wound



to the bottom, lay it bare to the bone; not spare himself or his own pains, but cry as loud as he can; though he spend his strength, and waste his spirits, though he get their ill-will by it, and get himself into an ill name; yet he must not spare. He must lift up his voice like a trumpet, to make those hear of their faults, that were apt to be deaf, when admonition was addressed to them. He must give his reproofs in the most powerful and pressing manner possible, as one who desired to be heeded. The trumpet does not give an uncertain sound, but, though loud and shrill, is intelligible; so must his alarms be, giving them warning of the fatal consequences of sin, Ezek. xxxiii. 3.

II. He must acknowledge how very good they seemed to be, notwithstanding, (v. 2.) *Yet they seek me daily.* When the prophet went about to show them their transgressions, they pleaded that they could see no transgressions which they were guilty of; for they were diligent and constant in attending on God's worship—and what more would he have of them? Now, 1. He owns the matter of fact to be true; as far as hypocrites do that which is good, they shall not be denied the praise of it, let them make their best of it. It is owned that they have a form of godliness: (1.) They go to church, and observe their hours of prayer; *They seek me daily;* they are very constant in their devotions, and never omit them, nor suffer any thing to put them by. (2.) They love to hear good preaching; *They delight to know my ways,* as Herod, who heard John gladly, and the stony ground, that received the seed of the word with joy; it is to them *as a lovely song*, Ezek. xxxiii. 32. (3.) They seem to take a great pleasure in the exercises of religion, and to be in their element when they are at their devotions; *They delight in approaching to God*, not for his sake to whom they approach, but for the sake of some pleasing circumstance, the company, or the festival. (4.) They are inquisitive concerning their duty, and seem desirous only to know it, making no question but that then they should do it; *They ask of me the ordinances of justice*, the rulers of piety in the worship of God, the rulers of equity in their dealings with men, both which are ordinances of justice. (5.) They appear to the eye of the world as if they made conscience of doing their duty; *They are as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of their God;* others took them for such, and they themselves took on them to be such; nothing lay open to view, that was a contradiction to their profession, but they seemed to be such as they should be. Note, Men may go a great way toward heaven, yet come short; nay, may go to hell with a good reputation. But, 2. He intimates that this was so far from being a cover or excuse for their sin, that really it was an aggravation of it: "Show them their sins which they go on in, notwithstanding their knowledge of good and evil, sin and duty, and the convictions of their consciences concerning it."

3. Wherefore have we fasted, *say they*, and thou seest not? *wherefore* have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labours. 4. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as *ye do this day*, to make your voice to be heard on high. 5. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? *is it* to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes *under him*? Wilt thou call this a fast, and

an acceptable day to the LORD? 6. *Is not* this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? 7. *Is it not* to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

Here we have,

I. The displeasure which these hypocrites conceived against God, for not accepting the services which they themselves had a mighty opinion of; (v. 3.) *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not?* Thus they went in the way of Cain, who was angry at God, and resented it as a gross affront, that his offering was not accepted. Having gone about to put a cheat upon God by their external services, here they go about to pick a quarrel with God for not being pleased with their services, as if he had not done fairly or justly by them. Observe, 1. How they boast of themselves, and magnify their own performances; "*We have fasted, and afflicted our souls;* we have not only sought God daily, (v. 2.) but have kept some certain times of more solemn devotion." Some think it refers to the yearly fast, which was called *the day of atonement*; others, to the arbitrary occasional fasts. Note, It is common for unhumiliated hearts to be proud of their professions of humiliation, as the Pharisee, (Luke xviii. 12.) *I fast twice in the week.* 2. What they expected from their performances; they thought God should take great notice of them, and own himself a Debtor to them for their services. Note, It is a common thing for hypocrites, while they perform the external services of religion, to promise themselves that acceptance with God, which he has promised only to the sincere; as if they must be accepted of course, or for a compliment. 3. How heinously they take it, that God had not put some particular marks of his favour upon them, that he had not immediately delivered them out of their troubles, and advanced them to honour and prosperity: they charge God with injustice and partiality, and seem resolved to throw up their religion, and justify themselves in doing so with this, that they had found *no profit in praying to God*, Job xxi. 14, 15. Mal. iii. 14. Note, Reigning hypocrisy often breaks out in daring impiety, and an open contempt and reproach of God and religion, for that which the hypocrisy itself must bear all the blame of. Sinners reflect upon religion as a hard and melancholy service, and which there is nothing to be got by, when really it is their own fault that it seems so to them, because they are not sincere in it.

II. The true reason assigned why God did not accept their fastings, nor answer the prayers they made on their fast-days; it was because they did not fast aright; *to God, even to him*, Zech. vii. 5. They fasted indeed, but they persisted in their sins, and did not, as the Ninevites, turn every one from his evil way; but in the day of their fast, and notwithstanding the professed humiliations and covenants of that day, they went on to find pleasure, to do whatsoever seemed right in their own eyes, lawful or unlawful, *Quicquid libet, licet*—*making their inclinations their law*; though they seemed to afflict their souls, they still gratified their lusts as much as ever. 1. They were as covetous and unmerciful as ever; "*Ye exact all your labours from your servants, and will neither release them according to the law, nor relax the rigour of their servitude.*" This was their fault before the captivity, Jer. xxx:

8, 9. It was no less their fault after their captivity, notwithstanding all their solemn fasts; (Neh. v. 2.) "*Ye exact all your dues, your debts;*" (so some read it); "ye are as rigorous and severe in extorting what you demand from those that are poor, as ever you were, though it was at the close of the yearly fast that the release was proclaimed." 2. They were contentious and spiteful; (v. 4.) *Behold ye fast for strife and debate.* When they proclaimed a fast to deprecate God's judgments, they pretended to search for those sins which provoked God to threaten them with his judgments, and under that pretence perhaps particular persons were falsely accused, as Naboth in the day of Jezebel's fast, 1 Kings xxi. 12. Or, the contending parties among them upon those occasions were bitter and severe in their reflections one upon another, one side crying out, "It is owing to you," and the other, "It is owing to you, that our deliverance is not wrought." Thus, instead of judging themselves, which is the proper work of a fast-day, they condemned one another. They *fasted for strife*, with emulation which should make the most plausible appearance on a fast-day, and humour the matter best. Nor was it only tongue-quarrels that were fomented in the times of their fasting, but they came to blows too; *Ye smite with the fist of wickedness.* The cruel taskmasters beat their servants, and the creditors their insolvent debtors, whom they delivered to the tormentors; they abused poor innocents *with wicked hands.* Now while they thus *continued in sin*, in those very sins which were directly contrary to the intention of a fasting day, (1.) God would not allow them the use of such solemnities; "*Ye shall not fast at all, if ye fast as ye do this day, causing your voice to be heard on high*, in the heat of your clamours one against another; or in your devotions, which you perform so as to make them to be taken notice of for ostentation. *Bring me no more of these empty, noisy, vain oblations,*" ch. i. 13. Note, Those are justly forbidden the honour of a profession of religion, that will not submit to the power of it. (2.) He would not accept of them in the use of them; "*Ye shall not fast*, it shall not be looked upon as a fast, nor shall the voice of your prayers on those days be heard on high in heaven." Note, Those that fast and pray, and yet go on in their wicked ways, do but mock God and deceive themselves.

III. Plain instructions given concerning the true nature of a religious fast. In general, a fast is intended, 1. For the honouring and pleasing of God; it must be such a performance as he has chosen; (v. 5.) it must be *an acceptable day to the Lord*, in the duties of which we must study to approve ourselves to him, and obtain his favour, else it is not a fast, else there is nothing done to any purpose. 2. For the humbling and abasing of ourselves. A fast is a day to afflict the soul; if it do not express a genuine sorrow for sin, and do not promote a real mortification of sin, it is not a fast; the law of the day of atonement was, that on that day they should *afflict their souls*, Lev. xvi. 29. That must be done on a fast-day, which is a real affliction to the soul, as far as it is yet unregenerate and unsanctified, though a real pleasure and advantage to the soul as far as it is itself.

It concerns us therefore to inquire, on a fast-day, what it is that will be acceptable to God, and afflictive to our corrupt nature, and tending to its mortification.

(1.) We are here told negatively what is not the fast that God has chosen, and which does not amount to the afflicting of the soul. [1.] It is not enough to look demure, to put on a grave and melancholy aspect, to bow down the head like a bulrush that is withered and broken; as the hypocrites, that were

*of a sad countenance, and disfigured their faces, that they might appear unto men to fast*, Matth. vi. 16. Hanging down the head did indeed well enough become the publican, whose heart was truly humbled and broken for sin, and therefore in token of that, *would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven*; (Luke xiii. 13.) but when it was only mimicked, as here, it was justly ridiculed, it is but *hanging down the head like a bulrush*, which nobody regards or takes any notice of. As the hypocrite's humiliations are but like the hanging down of a bulrush, so his elevations in his hopes are but like the *flourishing of a bulrush*, (Job viii. 11, 12.) which, *while it is yet in its greenness, withers before any other herb* [2.] It is not enough to do penance, to mortify the body a little, while the body of sin is untouched. It is not enough for a man to spread sackcloth and ashes under him, which does indeed give him some uneasiness for the present, but is soon forgotten when he returns to *stretch himself upon his beds of ivory*, Amos vi. 4. *Wilt thou call this a fast?* No, it is but the shadow and carcase of a fast. *Wilt thou call this an acceptable day to the Lord?* No, it is so far from being so, that the hypocrisy of it is an abomination to him. Note, The shows of religion, though they show ever so fair in the eyes of the world, will not be accepted of God without the substance of it.

(2.) We are here told positively what is the fast that God has chosen; what that is, which will recommend a fast-day to the divine acceptance, and what is indeed afflicting the soul, crushing and subduing the corrupt nature: *it is not afflicting the soul for a day*, (as some read it, v. 5.) that will serve; no, it must be the business of our whole lives. It is here required,

[1.] That we be just to those with whom we have dealt hardly. The fast that God has chosen, consists in reforming our lives, and undoing what we have done amiss; (v. 6.) *to loose the bands of wickedness*, the bands which we have wickedly tied, and by which others are bound out from their right, or bound down under severe usage. Those which perhaps were at first bands of justice, tying men to pay a due debt, become, when the debt is exacted with rigour from those whom Providence has reduced and emptied, *bands of wickedness*, and they must be loosed, or they will bring us into bonds of guilt much more terrible. It is *to undo the heavy burden* laid on the back of the poor servant, under which he is ready to sink; it is *to let the oppressed go free* from the oppression which makes his life bitter to him. "Let the prisoner for debt, that has nothing to pay, be discharged, let the vexatious action be quashed, let the servant that is forcibly detained beyond the time of his servitude, be released, and thus break every yoke; not only let go those that are wrongfully kept under the yoke, but break the yoke of slavery itself, that it may not serve again another time, nor any be made again to serve under it."

[2.] That we be charitable to those that stand in need of charity, v. 7. The particulars in the former verse may be taken as acts of charity, that we not only release those whom we have unjustly oppressed, that is justice, but what we contribute to the rescue and ransom of those that are oppressed by others, to the release of captives, and the payment of the debts of the poor; but those in this verse are *plainly* acts of charity. This then is the fast that God has chosen. *First*, To provide food for those that want it; that is put first as the most necessary, and which the poor can but a little while live without; it is *to break thy bread to the hungry*. Observe, "It must be thy bread, that which is honestly got, not that which thou hast robbed others of; the bread which thou thyself hast occasion for.

the bread of thine allowance." We must deny ourselves, that we may have to give to him that needeth. "Thy bread, which thou hast spared from thyself and thy family, on the fast-day, if that or the value of it be not given to the poor, it is the miser's fast, which he makes a hand of, it is fasting for the world, not for God. *This is the true fast, to break thy bread to the hungry, not only to give them that which is already broken meat, but to break bread on purpose for them; to give them loaves, and not to put them off with scraps.*" *Secondly*, To provide lodging for those that want it; it is to *take care of the poor that are cast out*, that are forced from their dwelling, turned out of house and harbour; *are cast out as rebels*, (so some critics render it,) that are attainted, and whom therefore it is highly penal to protect; "If they suffer unjustly, make no difficulty of sheltering them; do not only find out quarters for them, and pay for their lodging elsewhere, but, which is a greater act of kindness, bring them to thine own house, make them thine own guests. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for though thou mayest not, as some have done, thereby entertain angels, thou mayest entertain Christ himself, who will recompense it in the resurrection of the just. *I was a stranger and ye took me in.*" *Thirdly*, To provide clothing for those that want it; "*When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him*, both to shelter him from the injuries of the weather, and to enable him to appear decently among his neighbours; give him clothes to come to church in, and in these and other instances hide not thyself from thine own flesh." Some understand it more strictly of a man's own kindred and relations; "If those of thine own house and family fall into decay, thou art *worse than an infidel* if thou dost not *provide* for them," 1 Tim. v. 8. Others understand it more generally; all that partake of the human nature are to be looked upon as our own flesh, for have we not all one Father? And for this reason we must not hide ourselves from them, not contrive to be out of the way when a poor petitioner inquires for us, not look another way when a moving object of charity and compassion presents itself; let us remember that they are flesh of our flesh, and therefore we ought to sympathize with them, and in doing good to them we really do good to our own flesh and spirit too in the issue; for *thus we lay up for ourselves a good foundation, a good bond, for the time to come.*

3. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee: the glory of the LORD shall be thy rearward. 9. Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, *Here I am.* If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity: 10. And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day: 11. And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. 12. And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many

generations; and thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the breach, The Restorer of paths to dwell in.

Here are precious promises for *those* to feast freely and cheerfully upon by faith, who keep the fasts that God has chosen; let them know that God will make it up to them. Here is,

I. A further account of the duty to be done, in order to our interest in these promises; (v. 9, 10.) and here, as before, it is required that we both do justly and love mercy, that we cease to do evil and learn to do well. 1. We must abstain from all acts of violence and fraud; "Those must be *taken away from the midst of thee*, from the midst of *thy person*, out of *thy heart*;" (so some); "thou must not only refrain from the practice of injury, but mortify in thee all inelination and disposition towards it." Or, *from the midst of thy people*; those in authority must not only not be oppressive themselves, but must do all they can to prevent and restrain it in all within their jurisdiction; they must not only *break the yoke* (v. 6.) but take away the yoke, that those who have been oppressed may never be re-enslaved; (as they were, Jer. xxxiv. 10, 11.) they must likewise *forebear threatening*, (Eph. vi. 9.) and take away the *putting forth of the finger*, which seems to have been then, as sometimes with us, a sign of displeasure, and the indication of a purpose to correct. Let not the finger be put forth, to point at those that are poor and in misery, and so to expose them to contempt: such expressions of contumely as are provoking and the products of ill-nature, ought to be banished from all societies; and let them not *speak vanity*, flattery, or fraud, to one another, but let all conversation be governed by sincerity. Perhaps that dissimulation, which is the bane of friendship, is meant by the putting forth of the finger, *by teaching with the finger*; (as Prov. vi. 13.) or, it is putting forth the finger with the ring on it, which was the badge of authority, and which therefore they produced when they spake iniquity, gave unrighteous sentences. 2. We must abound in all acts of charity and beneficence. We must not only give alms according as the necessities of the poor require, but (1.) We must give freely and cheerfully, and from a principle of charity; we must *draw out our soul to the hungry*, (v. 10.) not only draw out the money, and reach forth the hand, but do this from the heart, heartily, and without grudging; from a principle of compassion, and with a tender affection to such as we see to be in misery; let the heart go along with the gift, for God loves a cheerful giver, and so does a poor man too. When our Lord Jesus healed and fed the multitude, it was as having compassion on them. (2.) We must give plentifully and largely, so as not to tantalize, but to satisfy, the afflicted soul; "Do not only feed the hungry, but gratify the desire of the afflicted, and, if it lies in your power, make them easy." What are we born for, and what have we our abilities of body, mind, and estate for, but to do all the good we can in this world with them? And the poor we have always with us.

II. Here is a full account of the blessings and benefits which attend the performance of this duty. If a person, a family, a people, be thus disposed to every thing that is good, let them know for their comfort that they shall find God their bountiful Rewarder, and what they lay out in works of charity shall be abundantly made up to them.

1. God will surprise them with the return of mercy after great affliction, which shall be as welcome as the light of the morning after a long and dark night; (v. 8.) "*Then shalt thy light break forth as the morning*, and (v. 10.) *thy light shall rise in obscurity.* Though thou hast been long

buried alive, thou shalt recover thine eminency long overwhelmed with grief, thou shalt again look pleasant as the dawning day." Those that are cheerful in doing good, God will make cheerful in enjoying good; and this also is a special gift of God, Eccl. ii. 24. They that have showed mercy shall find mercy. Job, who in his prosperity had done a great deal of good, had friends raised up for him by the Lord, when he was reduced, who helped him with their substance, so that his light rose in obscurity. "Not only thy light, which is sweet, but thy health too, or the healing of the wounds thou hast long complained of, shall spring forth speedily; all thy grievances shall be redressed, and thou shalt renew thy youth, and recover thy vigour." Those that have helped others out of trouble, God will help when it is their turn.

2. God will put honour upon them: good works shall be recompensed with a good name; this is included in that *light which rises out of obscurity*. Though a man's extraction be mean, his family obscure, and he has no external advantages to gain him honour, yet, if he do good in his place, that will procure him respect and veneration, and his darkness shall by this means become as the noon-day; he shall become very eminent, and shine bright in his generation. See here, what is the surest way for a man to make himself illustrious; let him study to do good; he that would be the greatest of all, and best-beloved, let him by humility and industry make himself a servant of all. "Thy righteousness shall then go before thee, it shall introduce thee into the esteem of many, and make thee an interest. *Thy righteousness shall answer for thee*; (as Jacob says, Gen. xxx. 33.) it shall silence reproaches, nay, it shall bespeak thee more praises than thy humility can be pleased with." He that has given to the poor, his righteousness endures for ever, that is, the honour of it, Ps. cxii. 9.

3. They shall always be safe under the divine protection; "*Thy righteousness shall go before thee* as thy vanguard, to secure thee from enemies that charge thee in the front, and *the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward*, the gathering host, to bring up those of thee that are weary and are left behind, and to secure thee from the enemies that, like Amalek, fall upon thy rear." Observe, How good people are safe on all sides; let them look which way they will, behind them, or before them; let them look backward, or forward; they see themselves safe, and find themselves easy and quiet from the fear of evil; and observe what it is that is their defence, it is their righteousness, and the glory of the Lord; that is, as some suppose, Christ; for it is by him that we are justified, and God is glorified. He it is that goes before us, and is the Captain of our salvation, as he is the Lord our Righteousness; he it is that is our Rearward, on whom alone we can depend for safety when our sins pursue us, and are ready to take hold on us. Or, "God himself in his providence and grace shall both go before thee as thy Guide to conduct thee, and attend thee as thy Rearward to protect thee, and this shall be the reward of thy righteousness, and so shall be for the glory of the Lord as the Rewarder of it."

4. God will always be nigh unto them, to hear their prayers, v. 9. As, on the one hand, he that shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, shall himself cry, and God will not hear him; so, on the other hand, he that is liberal to the poor, his prayers shall come up with his alms for a memorial before God, as Cornelius's did; (Acts x. 4.) "*Then shalt thou call*, on thy fast-days, which ought to be days of prayer, and the Lord shall answer, shall give thee the things thou callest to him for; thou shalt cry when thou art in any distress or sudden fright, and he shall say, *Here I am*." This is a very con-

descending expression of God's readiness to hear prayer; when God calls to us by his word, it becomes us to say, *Here we are, what saith our Lord unto his servants?* But that God should say to us, *Behold me, here I am*, is strange. When we cry to him as if he were at a distance, he will let us know that he is near, even at our right hand, nearer than we thought he was; *It is I, be not afraid*. When danger is near, our Protector is nearer, *a very present Help*; "Here I am, ready to give you what you want, and do for you what you desire; what have you to say to me?" God is attentive to the prayers of the upright, Ps. cxxx. 2. No sooner do they call to him than he answers, *Ready, ready*. Wherever they are praying, God says, "Here I am hearing; I am *in the midst of you, nigh unto them in all things*," Deut. iv. 7.

5. God will direct them in all difficult and doubtful cases; (v. 11.) *The Lord shall guide thee continually*. While we are here in the wilderness of this world, we have need of continual direction from heaven, for if at any time we be left to ourselves, we shall certainly miss our way; and therefore it is to those who are good in God's sight, that he gives the wisdom which in all cases is profitable to direct, and he will be to them *instead of eyes*, Eccl. ii. 26. His providence will make their way plain to them, both what is their duty, and what will be most for their comfort.

6. God will give them abundance of satisfaction in their own minds. As the world is a wilderness in respect of wanderings, so that they need to be guided continually, so also is it in respect of wants, which makes it necessary that they have continual supplies; as Israel in the wilderness had not only the pillar of cloud, to guide them continually, but manna and water out of the rock, to satisfy their souls in drought, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, Ps. lxxiii. 1. To a good man God gives not only wisdom and knowledge, but joy; he is satisfied in himself with the testimony of his conscience, and the assurances of God's favour. "These will satisfy thy soul, will put gladness into thy heart, even in the drought of affliction; these will make fat the bones, and fill them with marrow; will give thee that pleasure which will be a support to thee, as the bones to the body, that joy of the Lord which will be thy strength. He shall give thy bones rest," (so some read it,) "rest from the pain and sickness which they have laboured under, and been chastened with;" so it agrees with that promise made to the merciful, (Ps. xli. 3.) *The Lord shall make all his bed in his sickness*. "Thou shalt be like a watered garden, so flourishing and fruitful in graces and comforts, and like a spring of water, like a garden that has a spring of water in it, whose waters fail not either in droughts or in frosts." The principle of holy love in those that are good shall be a *well of living water*, John iv. 14. As a spring of water, though it is continually sending forth its streams, is yet always full, so the charitable man abounds in good as he abounds in doing good, and is never the poorer for his liberality. He that waters shall himself be watered.

7. They and their families shall be public blessings. It is a good reward to those that are fruitful and useful, to be more so, and especially to have those who descend from them to be so too. This is here promised; (v. 12.) "They that now are of thee, thy princes, and nobles, and great men, shall have such authority and influence as they never had;" or, "Those that hereafter shall be of thee, thy posterity, shall be serviceable to their generation, as thou art to thine." It completes the satisfaction of a good man, as to this world, to think that those that come after him shall be doing good when he is gone. (1.) They shall re-edify cities

that have been long in ruins; shall *build the old waste places*, which had lain so long desolate, that the rebuilding of them was quite despaired of. This was fulfilled when the captives, after their return, repaired the cities of Judah, and dwelt in them, and many of those in Israel too, which had lain waste ever since the carrying away of the ten tribes. (2.) They shall carry on and finish that good work which was begun long before, and shall be helped over the obstructions which had retarded the progress of it; they shall raise up to the top that building, the foundation of which was laid long since, and has been for many generations in the rearing. This was fulfilled when the building of the temple was revived after it had stood still for many years, Ezra v. 2. Or, they shall raise up foundations which shall continue for many generations yet to come; they shall do that good which shall be of lasting consequence. (3.) They shall have the blessing and praise of all about them; "*Thou shalt be called, (and it shall be to thine honour,) the repairer of the breach, the breach made by the enemy in the wall of a besieged city, which whoso has the courage and dexterity to make up, or make good, gains great applause.*" Happy they who make up the breach at which virtue is running out, and judgments breaking in. "*Thou shalt be the restorer of paths, safe and quiet paths, not only to travel in, but to dwell in; so safe and quiet, that people shall make no difficulty of building their houses by the road-side.*" The sum is, That if they keep such fasts as God has chosen, he will settle them again in their former peace and prosperity, and there shall be none to make them afraid. See Zech. vii. 5, 9.—viii. 3.—5. It teaches us, that those who do justly, and love mercy, shall have the comfort of it in this world.

13. If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, *from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a Delight, the Holy of the LORD, Honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:* 14. Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Great stress was always laid upon the due observation of the sabbath-day, and it was particularly required from the Jews when they were captives in Babylon, because, by keeping that day in honour of the Creator, they distinguished themselves from the worshippers of the gods that have not made the heaven and the earth. See ch. li. 1, 2. where keeping the sabbath is joined, as here, with *keeping judgment and doing justice*. Some, indeed, understand this of the day of atonement, which they think is the fast spoken of in the former part of the chapter, and which is called a *sabbath of rest*, Lev. xxiii. 32. But as the fasts before spoken of seem to be those that were occasional, so this sabbath is doubtless the weekly sabbath, that great sign between God and his professing people; his appointing it, a sign of his favour to them; and their observing it, a sign of their obedience to him. Now observe here,

1. How the sabbath is to be sanctified; (v. 13.) and, there remaining still a sabbatism for the people of God, this law of the sabbath is still binding to us on our Lord's day.

(1.) Nothing must be done that puts contempt

upon the sabbath-day, or looks like having mean thoughts of it, when God has so highly dignified it. We must turn away our foot from the sabbath, from trampling upon it, as profane, atheistical people do; from travelling on that day; so some: we must turn away our foot from doing our pleasure on that holy day, from living at large, and taking a liberty to do what we please on sabbath-days, without the controul and restraint of conscience; or from indulging ourselves in the pleasure of sense, in which the modern Jews wickedly place the sanctification of the sabbath, though it is as great a profanation of it as any thing. On sabbath-days we must not do our own ways, not follow our callings; not find our own pleasure, not follow our sports and recreations; nay, we must not speak our own words, words that concern either our callings or our pleasures; we must not allow ourselves a liberty of speech on that day as on other days, for we must then mind God's ways, make religion the business of the day; we must choose the things that please him, and speak his words, speak of divine things as we sit in the house, and walk by the way; in all we say and do we must put a difference between this day and other days.

(2.) Every thing must be done that puts an honour on the day, and is expressive of our high thought of it; we must call it *a delight*, not *a task* and *a burden*; we must delight ourselves in it, in the restraints it lays upon us, and the services it obliges us to; we must be in our element when we are worshipping God, and in communion with him. *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!* We must not only count it a delight, but call it so, must openly profess the complacency we take in the day, and the duties of it; we must call it so to God, in thanksgiving for it, and earnest desire of his grace, to enable us to do the work of the day in its day, because we delight in it; we must call it so to others, to invite them to come, and share in the pleasure of it; and we must call it so to ourselves, that we may not entertain the least thoughts of wishing the sabbath gone, that we may sell corn. We must call it *the Lord's holy day, and honourable; holy*, separated from common use, and devoted to God and to his service; *the holy of the Lord*, the day which he has sanctified to himself. Even in Old Testament times the sabbath was called *the Lord's day*, and therefore is fitly called so still, and for a further reason, it is *the Lord Christ's day*, Rev. i. 10. It is holy, because it is the Lord's day, and upon both accounts it is honourable; it is a beauty of holiness that is upon it, it is ancient, and its antiquity is its honour; and we must make it appear that we look upon it as honourable by honouring him, that is, God, on that day. We then put honour upon the day, when we give honour to him that instituted it, and to whose honour it is dedicated.

2. What the reward is of sabbath-sanctification, v. 14. If we thus *remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy*,

(1.) We shall have the comfort of it; the work will be its own wages. *If we call the sabbath a delight, then shall we delight ourselves in the Lord;* he will more and more manifest himself to us as the delightful Subject of our thoughts and meditations, and the delightful Object of our best affections. Note, The more pleasure we take in serving God, the more pleasure we shall find in it. If we go about duty with cheerfulness, we shall go from it with satisfaction, and shall have reason to say, "It is good to be here, good to draw near to God."

(2.) We shall have the honour of it; *I will make thee to ride upon the high places of the earth*; which denotes not only great security, (as that, ch. xxxiii. 16. *He shall dwell on high*;) but great dignity and advancement; "*Thou shalt ride in state, shalt appear conspicuous, and the eyes of all thy neighbours*

shall be upon thee." It was said of Israel, when God led them triumphantly out of Egypt, that *he made them to ride on the high places of the earth*, Deut. xxxii. 12, 13. Those that honour God and his sabbath, he will thus honour. If God by his grace enable us to live above the world, and so to manage it, as not only not to be hindered by it, but to be furthered and carried on by it in our journey toward heaven, then he makes us *to ride on the high places of the earth*.

(3.) We shall have the profit of it, I will *feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father*, with all the blessings of the covenant, and all the precious products of Canaan, which was a type of heaven, and the heritage of Jacob. Observe, The heritage of believers is what they shall not only be portioned with hereafter, but fed with now; fed with the hopes of it, and not flattered; fed with the earnestness and foretastes of it; and they that are so fed, have reason to say that they are well fed. In order that we may depend upon it, it is added, "*The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it*; you may take God's word for it, for he cannot lie nor deceive; what his mouth has spoken his hand will give, his hand will do, and not one iota or tittle of his good promise shall fall to the ground." *Blessed, therefore, thrice blessed, is he that doeth this, and lays hold on it, that keeps the sabbath from polluting it.*

### CHAP. LIX.

In this chapter, we have sin appearing exceeding sinful, and grace appearing exceeding gracious; and as what is here said of the sinner's sin, (v. 7, 8.) is applied to the general corruption of mankind, (Rom. iii. 15.) so what is here said of a redeemer, (v. 20.) is applied to Christ, Rom. xi. 26. I. It is here charged upon this people, that they had themselves stopped the current of God's favours to them, and the particular sins are specified which kept good things from them, v. 1-8. II. It is here charged upon them, that they had themselves procured the judgments of God upon them, and they are told both what the judgments were which they had brought upon their own heads, (v. 9-11.) and what the sins were which provoked God to send those judgments, v. 12-15. III. It is here promised that, notwithstanding this, God would work deliverance for them, purely for his own name's sake, (v. 16-19.) and would reserve mercy in store for them, and entail it upon them, v. 20, 21.

1. **B**EHOLD, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. 3. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. 4. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. 5. They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper. 6. Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. 7. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting

and destruction are in their paths. 8. The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths; whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

The prophet here rectifies the mistake of those who had been quarrelling with God, because they had not the deliverances wrought for them which they had been often fasting and praying for, ch. lviii. 3. Now here he shows,

I. That it was not owing to God; they had no reason to lay the fault upon him, that they were not saved out of the hands of their enemies; for, 1. He was still as able to help as ever; *His hand is not shortened*, his power is not at all lessened, straitened, or abridged; whether we consider the extent of his power or the efficacy of it, God can reach as far as ever, and with as strong a hand as ever. Note, The church's salvation comes from the hand of God, and that is not waxed weak, nor at all shortened. *Is the Lord's hand waxed short?* (says God to Moses, Numb. xi. 23.) No, it is not; he will not have it thought so. Neither length of time, nor strength of enemies, nor weakness of instruments, can shorten or straiten the power of God, with which it is all one to save by many or by few. 2. He was still as ready and willing to help as ever, in answer to prayer; his ear is not heavy, that it cannot hear. Though he has many prayers to hear and answer, and though he has been long hearing prayer, yet he is still as ready to hear prayer as ever; the prayer of the upright is as much his delight as ever it was, and the promises which are pleaded, and put in suit, in prayer, are still yea and amen, inviolably sure. More is implied than is expressed; not only his ear is not heavy, but he is quick of hearing, *even before they call, he answers*, ch. lxxv. 24. If our prayers be not answered, and the salvation we wait for be not wrought for us, it is not because God is weary of hearing prayer, but because we are weary of praying; not because his ear is heavy when we speak to him, but because our ears are heavy when he speaks to us.

II. That it was owing to themselves, they stood in their own light, and put a bar in their own door; God was coming toward them in ways of mercy, and they hindered him; Your iniquities have *kept good things from you*, Jer. v. 25. See what mischief sin does. 1. It hinders God's mercies from coming down upon us; it is a partition-wall that separates between us and God. Notwithstanding the infinite distance that is between God and man by nature, there was a correspondence settled between them, till sin set them at variance, justly provoked God against man, and unjustly alienated man from God; thus it separates between them and God. "He is your God, yours in profession, and therefore there is so much the more malignity and mischiefousness in sin, which separates between you and him." Sin hides his face from us; (which denotes great displeasure, Deut. xxxi. 17.) it provokes him in anger to withdraw his gracious presence, to suspend the tokens of his favour, and the instances of his help; he hides his face, as refusing to be seen or spoken with. See here sin in its colours, sin exceeding sinful, withdrawing the creature from his allegiance to his Creator; and see sin in its consequences, sin exceeding hurtful, separating us from God, and so separating us not only from all good, but to all evil, (Deut. xxix. 21.) which is the very quintessence of the curse. 2. It hinders our prayers from coming up unto God; it provokes him to hide his face, that he will not hear, as he has said, ch. i. 15. If we regard iniquity in our heart, if we indulge it, and allow ourselves in it,



God will not hear our prayers, Ps. lxxvi. 18. We cannot expect that he should countenance us while we go on to affront him.

Now, to justify God in hiding his face from them, and proceeding in his controversy with them, the prophet shows very largely, in the following verses, how many and great their iniquities were, according to the charge given him, (*ch. lxxiii. 1.*) *To show God's people their transgressions*; and it is a black bill of indictment that is here drawn up against them, consisting of many particulars, any one of which was enough to separate between them and a just and a holy God. Let us endeavour to reduce these articles of impeachment to proper heads.

(1.) We must begin with their *thoughts*, for there all sin begins, and thence it takes its rise; *Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity, v. 7.* Their imaginations are so, only evil continually; their projects and designs are so; they are continually contriving some mischief or other, and how to compass the gratification of some base lust, *v. 4. They conceive mischief* in their fancy, purpose, counsel, and resolution; thus the embryo receives its shape and life; and then they bring forth iniquity, put it in execution when it is ripened for it; though it be in pain that the iniquity is brought forth, through the oppositions of Providence and the checks of their own consciences, yet, when they have compassed their wicked purpose, they look upon it with as much pride and pleasure as if it were a *man-child born into the world; thus when lust has conceived, it bringeth forth sin, Jam. i. 15.* This is called, (*v. 5.*) *hatching the cockatrice' egg, and weaving the spider's web.* See how the thoughts and contrivances of wicked men are employed, and about what they set their wits on work. [1.] At the best, it is about that which is foolish and frivolous; their thoughts are vain, like weaving the spider's web, which the poor silly animal takes a great deal of pains about, and when all is done, it is a weak, insignificant thing, a reproach to the place where it is, and which the besom sweeps away in an instant: such are the thoughts which worldly men entertain themselves with, building castles in the air, and pleasing themselves with imaginary satisfactions; like the *spider, which takes hold with her hands* very finely, (*Prov. xxx. 28.*) but cannot keep her hold. [2.] Too often it is about that which is malicious and spiteful; they hatch the eggs of the cockatrice or adder, which are poisonous, and produce venomous creatures; such are the thoughts of the wicked who delight in doing mischief. He that eats of their eggs, that has any dealings with them, dies, he is in danger of having some mischief or other done him; and that which is crushed in order to be eaten of, or which begins to be hatched, and you promise yourself some useful fowl from it, breaks out into a viper, which you meddle with at your peril: happy they that have least to do with such men. Even the spider's web which they wove, was woven with a spiteful design to catch flies in, and make a prey of them; for, rather than not be doing mischief, they will play at small game.

(2.) Out of this abundance of wickedness in the heart their mouth speaks, and yet it does not always speak out the wickedness that is within, but, for the more effectual compassing of the mischievous design, it is dissembled, and covered with *much fair speech, (v. 3.) Your lips have spoken lies*; and again, (*v. 4.*) *They speak lies*, pretending kindness, where they intend the greatest mischief; or, by slanders and false accusations they blasted the credit and reputation of those they had a spite to, and so did them a real mischief unseen, and perhaps by suborning witnesses against them took from them their estates and lives; for a false tongue is sharp arrows and coals of juniper, and every thing that is

mischievous; *Your tongue has muttered perverse-ness.* When they could not, for shame, speak their malice against their neighbours aloud, or durst not, for fear of being disproved and put to confusion, they muttered it secretly. Backbiters are called *whisperers*.

(3.) Their actions were all of a piece with their thoughts and words. They were guilty of shedding innocent blood, a crime of the most heinous nature; *Your hands are defiled with blood; (v. 3.)* for blood is defiling, it leaves an indelible stain of guilt upon the conscience, which nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse it from; nor was this a case of surprise, or one that occurred when there was some thing of a force put upon them; but, (*v. 7.*) *their feet run to this evil*, naturally and eagerly, and, hurried on by the *impetus* of their malice and revenge, they make haste to shed innocent blood, as if they were afraid of losing an opportunity to do a barbarous thing, *Prov. i. 16. Jer. xxii. 17. Wasting and destruction are in their paths.* Wherever they go, they carry mischief along with them, and the tendency of their way is to lay waste and destroy, nor do they care what havoc they make; nor do they only thirst after blood, but with other iniquity are their *fingers defiled; (v. 3.)* they wrong people in their estates, and make every thing their own that they can lay their hands on. *They trust in vanity; (v. 4.)* they depend upon their arts of cozenage to enrich themselves with, which will prove vanity to them, and their deceiving others will but deceive themselves; their works, which they take so much pains about, and have their hearts so much upon, are all works of iniquity; their whole business is one continued course of oppressions and vexations, and the act of violence is in their hands, according to the arts of violence that are in their heads, and the thoughts of violence in their hearts.

(4.) No methods are taken to redress these grievances, and reform these abuses; (*v. 4.*) *None calls for justice*, none complains of the violation of the sacred laws of justice, nor seeks to right those that suffer wrong, or to get the laws put in execution against vice and profaneness, and those lewd practices which are the shame, and threaten to be the bane, of the nation. Note, When justice is not done, there is blame to be laid not only upon the magistrates that should administer justice, but upon the people that should call for it: private persons ought to contribute to the public good by discovering secret wickedness, and giving those an opportunity to punish it, that have it in the power of their hands; but it is ill with a state when princes rule ill, and the people love to have it so. Truth is opposed, and there is not any that pleads for it, not any that has the conscience and courage to appear in defence of an honest cause, and confront a prosperous fraud and wrong. The way of peace is as little regarded as the way of truth; they know it not, they never study the things that make for peace; no care is taken to prevent or punish the breaches of the peace, and to accommodate matters in difference among neighbours; they are utter strangers to every thing that looks quiet and peaceable, and affect that which is blustering and turbulent. *There is no judgment in their goings*; they have not any sense of justice in their dealings, it is a thing they make no account of at all, but can easily break through all its fences, if they stand in the way of their malicious, covetous designs.

(5.) In all this they act foolishly, very foolishly, and as much against their interest as against reason and equity. They that practise iniquity trust in vanity, which will certainly deceive them, *v. 4.* Their webs, which they weave with so much art and industry, *shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves*, either for shelter or for

ornament, *with their works*, v. 6. They may do hurt to others with their projects, but can never do any real service or kindness to themselves by them; there is nothing to be got by sin, and so it will appear when profit and loss come to be compared. Those paths of iniquity are *crooked paths*, (v. 8.) which will perplex them, but will never bring them to their journey's end; whosoever go therein, though they say that they shall have peace notwithstanding they go on, deceive themselves, for they shall not know peace; as appears by the following verses.

9. Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, *but* we walk in darkness. 10. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if *we had* no eyes: we stumble at noon-day as in the night; we *are* in desolate places as dead men. 11. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but *there is none*; for salvation, *but it is far off* from us. 12. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions *are* with us; and *as for* our iniquities, we know them: 13. In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. 14. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. 15. Yea, truth faileth; and he *that* departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw *it*, and it displeased him that *there was* no judgment.

The scope of this paragraph is the same with that of the last, to show that sin is the great mischief-maker; as it is that which keeps good things from us, so it is that which brings evil things upon us. But as *there it* is spoken by the prophet, in God's name, to the people, for their conviction and humiliation, and that God might be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges; so *here it* seems to be spoken by the people of God, as an acknowledgment of that which was there told them, and an expression of their humble submission and subscription to the justice and equity of God's proceedings against them. Their uncircumcised hearts here seem to be humbled in some measure, and they are brought to confess: the confession is at least extorted from them, that God has justly walked contrary to them, because they had walked contrary to him.

1. They acknowledge that God had contended with them, and had walked contrary to them. Their case was very deplorable, v. 9, 10, 11. (1.) They were in distress, trampled upon and oppressed by their enemies, unjustly dealt with, and ruled with rigour; and God did not appear for them, to plead their just and injured cause; "*Judgment is far from us, neither does justice overtake us*. Though as to our persecutors, we are sure that we have right on our side, and they are the wrong-doers, yet we are not relieved, we are not righted; we have not done justice to one another, and therefore God suffers our enemies to deal thus unjustly with us, and we are as far as ever from being restored to our

right, and recovering our property again; oppression is near us, and judgment is far from us; our enemies are far from giving our case its due consideration, but still hurry us on with the violence of their oppressions, and justice does not overtake us to rescue us out of their hands." (2.) Herein their expectations were sadly disappointed, which made their case the more sad; "We wait for light as they that wait for the morning, but behold obscurity; we cannot discern the least dawning of the day of our deliverance; *we look for judgment, but there is none*; (v. 11.) neither God nor man appears for our succour; we look for salvation, because God (we think) has promised it, and we have prayed for it with fasting; we looked for it as for brightness, but it is far off from us, as far off as ever, for aught we can perceive, and still we walk in darkness; and the higher our expectations have been raised, the sorer is the disappointment." (3.) They were quite at a loss what to do to help themselves, and were at their wit's end; (v. 10.) "*We grope for the wall like the blind*, we see no way open for our relief, nor know which way to expect it, or what to do in order to it." If we shut our eyes against the light of divine truth, it is just with God to hide from our eyes the things that belong to our peace; and, if we use not our eyes as we should, to let us be as if we had no eyes; they that will not see their duty, shall not see their interest: Those whom God has given up to a judicial blindness, are strangely infatuated; they stumble at noon-day as in the night, they see not either those dangers, or those advantages, which all about them see; *Quos Deus vult perdere, eos dementat*—God infatuates those whom he means to destroy. Those that love darkness rather than light, shall have their doom accordingly. (4.) They sunk into despair, and were quite overwhelmed with grief, the marks of which appeared in every man's countenance; they grew melancholy upon it, shunned conversation, and affected solitude; *We are in desolate places as dead men*. The state of the Jews in Babylon is represented by *dead and dry bones*, (Ezek. xxxvii. 1.) and the explanation of the comparison there, (v. 11.) explains this text, *Our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts*. In this despair, the sorrow and anguish of some were loud and noisy; *We roar like bears*; the sorrow of others was silent, and preyed more upon their spirits; "*We mourn sore like doves*, like doves of the valleys; we mourn both *for our iniquities*, (Ezek. vii. 16.) and for our calamities." Thus they own that *the hand of the Lord was gone out against them*.

2. They acknowledge that they had provoked God thus to contend with them, that he had done right, for they had done wickedly, v. 12.—15. (1.) They owned that they had sinned, and that to this day they were in a great trespass, as Ezra speaks, (ch. x. 10.) "*Our transgressions are with us*; the guilt of them is upon us, the power of them prevails among us, we are not yet reformed, nor have we parted with our sins, though they have done us so much mischief; nay, our transgressions are multiplied, they are more numerous and more heinous than they have been formerly; look which way we will, we cannot look off them, all places, all orders and degrees of men are infected; the sense of our transgression is with us, as David said, *My sin is ever before me*; it is too plain to be denied or concealed, too bad to be excused or palliated. God is a Witness to them: *They are multiplied before thee*, in thy sight, under thine eye. We are witnesses against ourselves: *As for our iniquities, we know them*, though we may have foolishly endeavoured to cover them; nay, they themselves are witnesses, our sins stare us in the face, and testify against us, so many have they been, and so deeply aggravated." (2.) They own the great evil and malignity of sin, of their sin;

it is *transgressing and lying against the Lord, v. 13.* The sins of those that profess themselves God's people, and bear his name, are, upon *this* account, worse than the sins of others, that in transgressing they *lie against the Lord*, they falsely accuse him, they misrepresent and belie him, as if he had dealt hardly and unfairly with them; or, they perfidiously break covenant with him, and falsify their most sacred and solemn engagements to him, that is *lying against him: it is departing away from our God*, to whom we are bound as our God, and to whom we ought to cleave with purpose of heart; from him we have departed, as the rebellious subject from his allegiance to his rightful prince, and the adulterous wife from the guide of her youth, and the covenant of her God. (3.) They own that there was a general decay of moral honesty; and it is not strange that those who were false to their God were unfaithful to one another. They spake oppression, declared openly for that, though it was a revolt from their God, and a revolt from truth, by the sacred bonds of which we should always be tied and held fast. They conceived and uttered words of falsehood; many an ill thing is conceived in the mind, yet is prudently stifled there, and not suffered to go any further; but these sinners were so impudent, so daring, that whatever wickedness they conceived, they gave it an *imprimatur*—a sanction, and made no difficulty of publishing it; to think an ill thing is bad, but to say it is much worse. Many a word of falsehood is uttered in haste, for want of consideration; but these were conceived and uttered, were uttered deliberately, and of malice pre-pense. They were words of falsehood, and yet they are said to be uttered from the heart, because though they differed from the real sentiments of the heart, and therefore were words of falsehood, yet they agreed with the malice and wickedness of the heart, and were the natural language of that; it was a *double heart*, Ps. xii. 2. Those who by the grace of God keep themselves free from these crimes, yet put themselves into the confession of sin, because members of that nation which was generally thus corrupted. (4.) They own that that was not done, which might have been done, to reform the land, and to amend what was amiss, *v. 14.* Judgment, that should go forward, and bear down the opposition that is made to it, that should run its course like a river, like a mighty stream, is turned away backward, a contrary course; and administration of justice is become but a cover to the greatest injustice; judgment, that should check the proceedings of fraud and violence, is driven back, and so they go on triumphantly. "Justice stands afar off, even from our courts of judicature, which are so crowded with the patrons of oppression, that equity cannot enter, cannot have admission into the court, cannot be heard, or at least will not be heeded. Equity enters not into the unrighteous decrees which they decree, *ch. x. 1. Truth is fallen in the street*, and there it may lie to be trampled upon by every foot of pride, and she has never a friend that will lend a hand to help her up; *yea, truth fails*, in common conversation, and in dealings between man and man, so that one knows not whom to believe or whom to trust." (5.) They own that there was a prevailing enmity in men's minds to those that were good; *He that does evil goes unpunished*; but *he that departs from evil makes himself a prey* to those beasts of prey that were before described; it is crime enough with them for a man not to do as they do, and they treat him as an enemy who will not partake with them in their wickedness. *He that departs from evil is accounted mad*; so the margin reads it; sober singularity is branded as folly, and he is thought next dear to a madman, who swims against the stream that runs so strong. (6.) They

own that all this could not but be very displeasing to the God of heaven. The evil was done in his sight; they knew very well, though they were not willing to acknowledge it, that the Lord saw it; though it was done secretly, and gilded over with specious pretences, yet it could not be concealed from his all-seeing eye; all the wickedness that is in the world is naked and open before the eyes of God. And as he is of quicker eyes than not to see iniquity, so he is of purer eyes than to behold it with the least approbation or allowance; *He saw it and it displeased him*, though it was among his own professing people that he saw it; it was evil in his eyes, he saw the sinfulness of all this sin, and that which was most offensive to him was, *that there was no judgment*, no reformation; had he seen any signs of that, though the sin displeased him, he would soon have been reconciled to the sinners, upon their returning from their evil way. *Then* the sin of a nation becomes national, and brings public judgment, where it is not restrained by public justice.

16. And he saw that *there was* no man, and wondered that *there was* no intercessor; therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. 17. For he put on righteousness as a breast plate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. 18. According to *their* deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompense. 19. So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. 20. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. 21. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD: My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

How sin abounded, we have read, to our great amazement, in the former part of the chapter; how grace does much more abound, we read in these verses. And as sin took occasion from the commandment to become more exceeding sinful, so grace took occasion from the transgression of the commandment to appear more exceeding gracious. Observe,

I. Why God wrought salvation for this provoking people, notwithstanding their provocations; it was purely for his own name's sake; because there was nothing in them either to bring it about, or to induce him to bring it about for them, no merit to deserve it, no might to effect it, he would do it himself, would be exalted in his own strength, for his own glory. 1. He took notice of their weakness and wickedness; *He saw that there was no man* that would do any thing for the support of the bleeding cause of religion and virtue among men, not a man that would execute judgment, (Jer. v. 1.) that would

bestir himself in a work of reformation; those that complained of the badness of the times, had not zeal and courage enough to appear and act against it; there was a universal corruption of manners, and nothing done to stem the tide; most were wicked, and these that were not so, were yet weak, and durst not attempt any thing in opposition to the wickedness of the wicked. *There was no intercessor*; either none to intercede with God, to stand in the gap, by prayer to turn away his wrath; (it would have pleased him to be thus met, and he wondered that he was not); or, rather, none to interpose for the support of justice and truth, which were trampled upon, and run down, (v. 14.) no advocate to speak a good word for those who were made a prey of because they kept their integrity, v. 15. They complained that God did not appear for them; (*ch. lviii. 3.*) but God with much more reason complains that they did nothing for themselves, intimating how ready he would have been to do them good, if he had found among them the least motion towards a reformation. 2. He engaged his own strength and righteousness for them; they shall be saved, for all this; and,

(1.) Because they have no strength of their own, not any active men that will set to it in good earnest, to redress the grievances either of their iniquities or of their calamities, therefore *his own arm shall bring salvation to him*, to his people, or to him whom he would raise up to be the Deliverer, Christ, the Power of God, and Arm of the Lord, that Man of his right hand, whom he made strong for himself. The work of reformation (that is the first and principal article of the salvation) shall be wrought by the immediate influences of the divine grace on men's consciences. Since magistrates, and societies for reformation, fail of doing their part, one will not do justice, nor the other call for it, God will let them know that he can do it without them, when his time is come thus to prepare his people for mercy. And then the work of deliverance shall be wrought by the immediate operations of the Divine Providence on men's affections or affairs. When God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, and brought his people out of Babylon, *not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts*, then his own arm brought salvation, which is never shortened.

(2.) Because they have no righteousness of their own to merit these favours, and to which God might have an eye in working for them, therefore his own righteousness sustained him, and bore him out in it. Divine justice, which by their sins they had armed against them, through grace appears for them. Though they can expect no favour as due to them, yet he will be just to himself, to his own purpose, and promise, and covenant with his people: he will, in righteousness, punish the enemies of his people; see Deut. ix. 5. *Not for thy righteousness, but for the wickedness of these nations*, they are driven out. In our redemption by Christ, since we had no righteousness of our own to produce, on which God might proceed, in favour to us, he brought in a righteousness by the merit and mediation of his own Son, (it is called *the righteousness which is of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 9.) and this righteousness sustained him, and bore him out in all his favours to us, notwithstanding our provocations. *He put on righteousness as a breastplate*, securing his own honour, as a breastplate does the vitals, in all his proceedings, by the justice and equity of them; and then he put a *helmet of salvation upon his head*; so sure is he to effect the salvation he intends, that he takes salvation itself for his helmet, which therefore must needs be impenetrable, and in which he appears very illustrious, formidable in the eyes of his enemies, and amiable in the eyes of his friends. When righteousness is his coat of arms, salvation is

his crest. In allusion to this, among the pieces of a Christian's armour we find *the breastplate of righteousness*, and for a helmet, *the hope of salvation*; (Eph. vi. 14.—17. 1 Thess. v. 8.) and it is called *the armour of God*, because he wore it first, and so fitted it for us.

(3.) Because they have no spirit or zeal to do any thing for themselves, God will *put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and clothe himself with zeal as a cloak*; he will make his justice upon the enemies of his church and people, and his jealousy for his own glory and the honour of religion and virtue among men, to appear evident and conspicuous in the eye of the world; and in these he will show himself great, as a man shows himself in his rich attire, or in the distinguishing habit of his office. If men be not zealous against sin, God will, and will take vengeance on it for all the injury it has done to his honour, and his people's welfare; and this was the business of Christ in the world, to take away sin, and be revenged on it.

II. What the salvation is, that shall be wrought out by the righteousness and strength of God himself.

1. There shall be a present temporal salvation wrought out for the Jews in Babylon, or elsewhere, in distress and captivity. This is promised (v. 18, 19.) as a type of something further. When God's time is come, he will do his own work, though these fail that should forward it. It is here promised,

(1.) That God will reckon with his enemies, and will render to them according to their deeds; to the enemies of his people abroad, that have oppressed them; to the enemies of justice and truth at home, that have oppressed them; for they also are God's enemies; and when the day of vengeance comes, he will deal with both as they have deserved; *according to retribution*, (so the word is,) the law of retributions; (Rev. xiii. 10.) or, *according to former retributions*, as he has rendered to his enemies formerly, accordingly he will now repay, *fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies*; his fury shall not exceed the rules of justice, as men's fury commonly does. Even to the islands, that lie most remote, if they have appeared against him, he will repay recompense; for *his hand shall find out all his enemies*, (Ps. xxi. 8.) and his arrows reach them. Though God's people have behaved so ill, that they do not deserve to be delivered, yet his enemies behave so much worse, that they do deserve to be destroyed.

(2.) That, whatever attempts the enemies of God's people may afterward make upon them, to disturb their peace, they shall be baffled and brought to naught; *When the enemy shall come in like a flood*, like a high spring-tide, or a land-flood, which threatens to bear down all before them without control, then the Spirit of the Lord by some secret, undiscerned power, shall lift up a standard against him, and so (as the margin reads it) *put him to flight*. He that has delivered, will still deliver. When God's people are weak and helpless, and have no standard to lift up against the invading power, God will *give a banner to them that fear him*, (Ps. lx. 4.) will by his Spirit lift up a standard, which will draw multitudes together to appear on the church's behalf. Some read it, *He shall come* (the name of the Lord, and his glory, before foreseen in the Messiah promised) *like a straight river, the Spirit of the Lord lifting him up for an Ensign*. Christ by the preaching of his gospel shall cover the earth with the knowledge of God as with the waters of a flood, the *Spirit of the Lord* setting up Christ as a *Standard to the Gentiles*, *ch. xi. 10.*

(3.) That all this should redound to the glory of God, and the advancement of religion in the world; (v. 19.) *So shall they fear the name of the Lord and his glory*, in all nations that lie eastward or west

ward. The deliverance of the Jews out of captivity, and the destruction brought on their oppressors, would awaken multitudes to inquire concerning the God of Israel, and induce them to serve and worship him, and enlist themselves under the standard which the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up. God's appearances for his church shall occasion the accession of many to it. This had its full accomplishment in gospel-times, when many came from the east and west, to fill up the places of the children of the kingdom that shall be cast out when there were set up eastern and western churches, Matth. viii. 11.

2. There shall be a more glorious salvation wrought out by the Messiah in the fulness of time, which salvation all the prophets upon all occasions, had in view. We have here the two great promises relating to that salvation.

(1.) That the Son of God shall come to us to be our Redeemer; (v. 20.) *Thy Redeemer shall come*; it is applied to Christ, (Rom. xi. 26.) *There shall come the Deliverer*. The coming of Christ as the Redeemer is the summary of all the promises both of the Old and New Testament, and this was the redemption in Jerusalem which the believing Jews looked for, Luke ii. 38. Christ is our *Goel*, our next Kinsman, that redeems both the person and the estate of the poor debtor. Observe, [1.] The place where this Redeemer shall appear; he shall come to *Zion*, for there, on that holy hill, the Lord would set him up as his King, Ps. ii. 6. *In Zion the chief Corner-stone was to be laid*, 1 Pet. ii. 6. *He came to his temple there*, (Mal. iii. 1.) *there salvation was to be placed*, (ch. xlv. 13.) for thence the law was to go forth, ch. ii. 3. *Zion* was a type of the gospel-church, for which the Redeemer acts in all his appearances; *The Redeemer shall come for the sake of Zion*; so the LXX. read it. [2.] The persons that shall have the comfort of the Redeemer's coming, that shall then lift up their heads, knowing that their redemption draws nigh; he shall come to those that turn from ungodliness to Jacob, to those that are in Jacob, to the praying seed of Jacob, in answer to their prayers; yet not to all that are in Jacob, that are within the pale of the visible church, but to those only that turn from transgression, that repent and reform, and forsake those sins which Christ came to redeem them from. The sinners in *Zion* will fare never the better for the Redeemer's coming to *Zion*, if they go on still in their trespasses.

(2.) That the Spirit of God shall come to us, to be our Sanctifier, v. 21. In the Redeemer there was a new covenant made with us, a covenant of promises; and this is the great and comprehensive promise of that covenant, that God will give and continue his word and Spirit to his church and people throughout all generations. God's giving the Spirit to them that ask him, includes the giving of them all good things, Luke xi. 13. Matth. vii. 11. This covenant is here said to be made with them, with them that turn from transgression; for they that cease to do evil shall be taught to do well. But the promise is made to a single person, *My Spirit that is upon thee*, being directed, either, [1.] To Christ as the Head of the church, who received, that he might give. The Spirit promised to the church was first upon him, and from his head that precious ointment descended to the skirts of his garments; and the word of the gospel was first put into his mouth; for it began to be spoken by the Lord. And all believers are his seed, in whom he prolongs his days, ch. liii. 10. Or, [2.] To the church; and so it is a promise of the continuance and perpetuity of the church in the world to the end of time, parallel to those promises, that the throne and seed of Christ shall endure for ever, Ps. lxxxix. 29, 36. — xxii. 30. Observe, *First*, How the church shall be

kept up; in a succession, as the world of mankind is kept up, by the seed and the seed's seed; as one generation passes away, another generation shall come; *instead of the fathers shall be the children*. *Secondly*, How long it shall be kept up; *from henceforth and for ever*, always, even unto the end of the world; for the world being left to stand for the sake of the church, we may be sure that as long as it does stand, Christ will have a church in it, though not always visible. *Thirdly*, By what means it shall be kept up; by the constant residence of the Word and Spirit in it. 1. The Spirit that was upon Christ shall always continue in the hearts of the faithful; there shall be some in every age on whom he shall work, and in whom he shall dwell, and thus the Comforter shall abide with the church for ever, John xiv. 16. 2. The word of Christ shall always continue in the mouths of the faithful; there shall be some in every age, who, believing with the heart unto righteousness, shall with the tongue make confession unto salvation. The word shall never depart out of the mouth of the church, for there shall still be a seed to speak Christ's holy language, and profess his holy religion. Observe, The Spirit and the word go together, and by them the church is kept up. For the word in the mouths of our ministers, nay, the word in our own mouths, will not profit us, unless the Spirit work with the word, and give us an understanding. But the Spirit does his work by the word, and in concurrence with it; and whatever is pretended to be a dictate of the Spirit must be tried by the scriptures. On these foundations the church is built, stands firm, and shall stand for ever; Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone.

## CHAP. LX.

This whole chapter is all to the same purport, all in the same strain; it is a part of God's covenant with his church, which is spoken of in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, and the blessings here promised are the fruits of the word and Spirit there promised. The long continuance of the church, even unto the utmost ages of time, was there promised, and here the large extent of the church, even unto the utmost regions of the earth; and both these tend to the honour of the Redeemer. It is here promised, I. That the church should be enlightened and shined upon, v. 1, 2. II. That it should be enlarged, and great additions made to it, to join in the service of God, v. 3.—8. III. That the new converts should be greatly serviceable to the church, and to the interests of it, v. 9.—13. IV. That the church shall be in great honour and reputation among men, v. 14.—16. V. That it shall enjoy a profound peace and tranquillity, v. 17, 18. VI. That the members of it being all righteous, the glory and joy of it shall be everlasting, v. 19.—22. Now this has some reference to the peaceable and prosperous condition which the Jews were sometimes in, after their return out of captivity into their own land; but it certainly looks further, and was to have its full accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, the enlargement of that kingdom by the bringing in of the Gentiles into it, and the spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ Jesus, with which it should be enriched, and all these earnest of eternal joy and glory.

1. **A**RISE, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. 2. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. 3. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. 4. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. 5.

Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thy heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. 6. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD. 7. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. 8. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?

It is here promised that the gospel-temple shall be very light, and very large.

I. It shall be very light; *Thy light is come*. When the Jews returned out of captivity, they had *light and gladness, and joy and honour*; they then were made to *know the Lord, and to rejoice in his great goodness*; and upon both accounts their light came. When the Redeemer came to Zion, he brought light with him, he himself came to be a Light. Now observe, 1. What this light is, and whence it springs; *The Lord shall arise upon thee, (v. 2.) the glory of the Lord, (v. 1.) that shall be seen upon thee*. God is the Father and Fountain of lights, and it is in his light that we shall see light. As far as we have the knowledge of God in us, and the favour of God towards us, our light is come. When God appears to us and we have the comfort of his favour, then *the glory of the Lord rises upon us* as the morning-light; when he appears for us, and we have the credit of his favour, when he shows us some token for good, and proclaims his favour for us, then his glory is seen upon us, as it was upon Israel in the *pillar of cloud and fire*. When Christ arose as the Sun of righteousness, and in him the *day-spring from on high visited us*, then *the glory of the Lord* was seen upon us, the glory as of the *First-begotten of the Father*. 2. What a foil there shall be to this light; *Darkness shall cover the earth*; but, though it be gross darkness, darkness that might be felt, like that of Egypt, that shall overspread the people, yet the church, like Goshen, shall have light at the same time. When the case of the nations that have not the gospel shall be very melancholy, those *dark corners of the earth* being *full of the habitations of cruelty* to poor souls, the state of the church shall be very pleasant. 3. What is the duty which the rising of this light calls for; "*Arise, shine*; not only receive this light, and," (as the margin reads it) "*be enlightened by it*, but reflect this light; *arise, and shine* with rays borrowed from it." The children of light ought to shine as lights in the world: if God's glory be seen upon us to our honour, we ought not only with our lips, but in our lives, to return the praise of it to his honour, Matth. v. 16. Phil. ii. 15.

II. It shall be very large. When the Jews were settled again in their own land after their captivity, many of the people of the land joined themselves to them; but it does not appear that there ever was any such numerous accession to them as would answer the fulness of this prophecy; and therefore we must conclude that this looks further, to the bringing of the Gentiles into the gospel-church; not their flocking to one particular place, though under that type it is here described. There is no place now

that is the centre of the church's unity; but the promise respects their flocking to Christ, and coming by faith, and hope, and holy love, into that society, which is incorporated by the charter of his gospel, and of the unity of which he only is the Centre; that family which is named from him, Eph. iii. 15. The gospel-church is expressly called *Zion and Jerusalem*, and under that notion all believers are said to come to it: (Heb. xii. 22.) *Ye are come unto mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*; which serves for a key to this prophecy, Eph. ii. 19. Observe,

1. What shall invite such multitudes to the church; "*They shall come to thy light, and to the brightness of thy rising, v. 3.*" They shall be allured to join themselves to thee," (1.) "*By the light that shines upon thee*," the light of the glorious gospel, which the churches hold forth, in consequence of which they are called *golden candlesticks*; this light which discovers so much of God and his good will to man, by which light and immortality are brought to light, this shall invite all the serious, well-affected part of mankind to come, and join themselves to the church, that they may have the benefit of this light, to inform them concerning truth and duty. (2.) "*By the light with which thou shinest*," the purity and love of the primitive Christians, their heavenly-mindedness, contempt of the world, and patient sufferings, were the brightness of the church's rising, which drew many into it. The beauty of holiness was the powerful attractive by which Christ had a willing people brought to him in the day of his power, Ps. cx. 2.

2. What multitudes shall come to the church. Great numbers shall come, *Gentiles, or nations, of them that are saved*, as it is expressed with allusion to this, Rev. xxi. 24. *Nations shall be discipled*; (Matth. xxviii. 19.) and even kings, men of figure, power, and influence, shall be added to the church. They come from all parts; (v. 4.) *Lift up thine eyes round about, and see them coming; devout men out of every nation under heaven*, Acts ii. 5. See how *white the fields are already to the harvest*, John iv. 35. See them coming in a body, as one man, and with one consent; *they gather themselves together*, that they may strengthen one another's hands, and encourage one another; *Come and let us go, ch. ii. 3.* "They come from the remotest parts; they come to thee from far, having heard the report of thee, as the queen of Sheba, or seen thy star in the east, as the wise men, and they will not be discouraged by the length of the journey from coming to thee. There shall come some of both sexes; sons and daughters shall come in the most dutiful manner, as thy sons and thy daughters, resolved to be of thy family, to submit to the laws of thy family, and put themselves under the tuition of it. They shall come to be nursed at thy side; to have their education with thee from their cradle." The church's children must be nursed at her side, not sent out to be nursed among strangers; there, where alone the sincere milk of the word is to be had, must the church's new-born babes be nursed, *that they may grow thereby*, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. They that would enjoy the dignities and privileges of Christ's family, must submit to the discipline of it.

3. What they shall bring with them, and what advantage shall accrue to the church by their accession to it. They that are brought into the church by the grace of God, will be sure to bring all they are worth in with them, which with themselves they will devote to the honour and service of God, and do good with in their places. (1.) The merchants shall write *holiness to the Lord* upon their merchandise and their hire, as ch. xxiii. 18. "*The abundance of the sea*, either the wealth that is fetched out of the sea, the fish, the pearls, or that which is im-



ported by sea, it shall all be converted to thee and to thy use." The wealth of the rich merchants shall be laid out in works of piety and charity. (2.) The mighty men of the nations shall employ their night in the service of the church; "*The forces, or troops, of the Gentiles shall come unto thee*, to guard thy coasts, strengthen thine interests, and, if occasion be, to fight thy battles." The forces of the Gentiles had often been against the church, but now they shall be for it; for as God, when he pleases, can, and, when we please him, will, make even *our enemies to be at peace with us*, (Prov. xvi. 6.) so when Christ overcomes the strong man armed, he divides his spoils, and makes that to serve his interests, which had been used against them, Luke xi. 22. (3.) The wealth imported by land-carriage, as well as that by sea, shall be made use of in the service of God and the church; (v. 6.) *The camels and dromedaries* that bring gold and incense, gold to make the golden altar of, and incense and sweet perfumes to burn upon it; they of Midian and Sheba shall bring the richest commodities of their country, not to trade with, but to honour God with, and not in small quantities, but camel-loads of them. This was in part fulfilled when the *wise men of the east*, (perhaps some of the countries here mentioned,) drawn by the *brightness of the star*, came to Christ, and presented to him treasures of *gold, frankincense, and myrrh*, Matth. ii. 11. (4.) Great numbers of sacrifices shall be brought to God's altar, acceptable sacrifices, and, though brought by Gentiles, they shall find acceptance, v. 7. Kedar was famous for flocks, and, probably, the fattest rams were those of Nebaioth; they shall come up with acceptance on God's altar. God must be served and honoured with what we have, according as he has blessed us, and with the best we have. This was fulfilled when by the decree of Darius the governors beyond the rivers (perhaps of some of these countries) were ordered to furnish the temple at Jerusalem with *bullocks, rams, and lambs, for the burnt-offering of the God of heaven*, Ezra vi. 9. It had a further accomplishment, and we trust will have, in the bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles to the church, which is called the *sacrificing or offering up of the Gentiles* unto God, Rom. xv. 16. The flocks and rams are precious souls; for they are said to minister to the church, and to come up as living sacrifices, presenting themselves to God by a *reasonable service, on his altar*, Rom. xii. 1.

4. How God shall be honoured by the increase of the church, and the accession of such numbers to it. (1.) They shall intend the honour of God's name in it. When they bring their gold and incense, it shall not be to show the riches of their country, or to gain applause to themselves for piety and devotion, but to *show forth the praises of the Lord*, v. 6. Our greatest services and gifts to the church are not acceptable, further than we have an eye to the glory of God in them. And this must be our business in our attendance on public ordinances, to *give unto the Lord the glory due to his name*; for *therefore*, as these here, we are called out of darkness into light, that we should *show forth the praises of him that called us*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. (2.) God will advance the honour of his own name by it; so he has said, (v. 7.) *I will glorify the house of my glory*. The Church is the house of God's glory, where he manifests his glory to his people, and receives that homage by which they do honour to him. And it is for the glory of this house, and of him that keeps house there, both that the Gentiles shall bring their offerings to it, and that they shall be accepted therein.

5. How the church shall herself be affected with this increase of her numbers, v. 5. (1.) She shall be in a transport of joy upon this account; "*Thou*

*shall see, and flow together*," (or flow to and fro,) "as in a pleasing agitation about it, surprised at it, but extremely glad of it." (2.) There shall be a mixture of fear with this joy; "*Thine heart shall fear*, doubting whether it be lawful to *go into the uncircumcised, and eat with them*." Peter was so possessed with this fear, that he needed a vision and voice from heaven to help him over it, Acts x. 28. But, (3.) "When this fear is conquered, thy heart shall be enlarged in holy love, so enlarged that thou shalt have room in it for all the Gentile converts, thou shalt not have such a narrow soul as thou hast had, nor affections so confined within the Jewish pale." When God intends the beauty and prosperity of his church, he gives this largeness of heart, and an extensive charity. (4.) These converts flocking to the church shall be greatly admired; (v. 8.) *Who are these that fly as a cloud?* Observe, [1.] How the conversion of souls is here described; it is flying to Christ and to his church; for thither we are directed; it is flying like a cloud, though in great multitudes, so as to overspread the heavens, yet with great unanimity, all as one cloud; they shall come with speed, as a cloud flying on the wings of the wind, and come openly, and in the view of all, *their very enemies beholding them*, (Rev. xi. 12.) and yet not able to hinder them. They shall *fly as doves to their windows*, in great flights, many together; they fly on the wings of the harmless dove, which flies low, denoting their innocence and humility. They fly to Christ, to the church, to the word and ordinances, as doves, by instinct, to their own windows, to their own home; thither they fly for refuge and shelter when they are pursued by the birds of prey; and thither they fly for rest when they have been wandering and are weary, as Noah's dove to the ark. [2.] How the conversion of souls is here admired; it is spoken of with wonder and with pleasure; *Who are these?* We have reason to wonder that so many flock to Christ; when we see them altogether, we shall wonder whence they all come; and we have reason to admire with pleasure and affection those that do flock to him; *Who are these?* How excellent, how amiable are they! What a pleasant sight is it to see poor souls hastening to Christ, with a full resolution to abide with him!

9. Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. 10. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. 11. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually: they shall not be shut day nor night; that *men* may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings *may be brought*. 12. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, *those* nations shall be utterly wasted. 13. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. 14. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that de-

spised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

The promises made to the church in the foregoing verses are here repeated, ratified, and enlarged upon; designed still for the comfort and encouragement of the Jews after their return out of captivity; but certainly looking further, to the enlargement and advancement of the gospel-church, and the abundance of spiritual blessings with which it shall be enriched.

1. God will be very gracious and propitious to them. We must begin with that promise, because thence all the rest take rise. The sanctuary that was desolate *then* begins to be repaired, when God *causes his face to shine upon it*, Dan. ix. 17. All the favour that the people of God find with men, is owing to the light of God's countenance, and his favour to them; (v. 10.) "All shall now make court to thee, for in my wrath I smote thee, while thou wast in captivity." (The sufferings of the church, especially by its corruptions, decays, and divisions, against which these promises here will be its relief, are sad tokens of God's displeasure.) "But now in my favour have I had mercy on thee, and therefore have all this mercy in store for thee."

1. Many shall be brought into the church, even from far countries; (v. 9.) *Surely the isles shall wait for me*, shall welcome the gospel, and shall attend God with their praises for it, and their ready subjection to it. *The ships of Tarshish*, transportships, shall lie ready to carry members from far distant regions to the church, or (which is equivalent) to carry the ministers of the church to remote parts, to preach the gospel, and to bring in souls to join themselves to the Lord. Observe, (1.) Who are brought; *thy sons*, such as are designed to be so, *those children of God that are scattered abroad*, John xi. 52. (2.) What they shall bring with them; they live at such a distance, that they cannot bring their flocks and their rams; but, like those who lived remote from Jerusalem, who, when they came up to worship at the feast, because they could not bring their tithes in kind, turned it into money; they shall *bring their silver and gold with them*. Note, When we give up ourselves to God, we must with ourselves give up all we have to him. If we honour him with our spirits, we shall honour him with our substance. (3.) To whom they shall devote and dedicate themselves, and all they are worth; *to the name of the Lord thy God*, to God as the Lord of all, and the church's God and King; even to the *Holy One of Israel*, whom Israel worships as a Holy One, in the beauty of holiness; because *he has glorified thee*. Note, The honour God puts upon his church and people, should not only engage us to honour them, but invite us to join ourselves to them; *We will go with you, for God is with you*, Zech. viii. 23.

3. Those that come into the church shall be welcome; for so spacious is the holy city, that though, *Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, yet still there is room*. "Therefore thy gates shall be open continually," (v. 11.) not only because thou hast no reason to fear thy enemies, but because thou hast reason to expect thy friends." It is usual with us to leave our doors open, or leave some to be ready to open them, all night, if we look for a child or a guest to come in late. Note, Christ is always ready to entertain those that come to him, is never out of the way, nor can they ever come unseasonably; the gate of mercy is always open, night and day, or shall soon be opened, to them that knock. Ministers, the doorkeepers, must be always ready to ad-

mit those that offer themselves to the Lord. God not only keeps a good house in his church, but he keeps open house; that, at any time, by the preaching of the word, *in season and out of season, the forces of the Gentiles*, and the kings or commanders of those forces, *may be brought into the church. Lift up your heads, O ye gates*, and let such welcome guests as these come in.

4. All that are about the church shall be made some way or other serviceable to it. Though dominion is far from being founded in men's grace, it is founded in God's; and he that made the inferior creatures useful to man, will make the nations of men useful to the church; *The earth helped the woman; All things are for your sakes*. So here, (v. 10.) "Even the sons of strangers that have neither knowledge of thee, nor kindness for thee, that have always been *aliens to the commonwealth of Israel*, even they shall build up thy wall, and their kings shall in that and other things minister unto thee, and not think it any disparagement to them." This was fulfilled when the king of Persia, and the governors of the provinces, by his order, were aiding and assisting Nehemiah in building the wall about Jerusalem. Rather than Jerusalem's walls shall lie still in ruins, the *sons of the stranger* shall be raised up to build them. Even those that do not belong to the church, may be a protection to it. And the greatest of men should not think it below them to minister to the church, but rejoice that they are in a capacity, and have a heart, to do it any service. Nay, it is the duty of all to do what they can in their places to advance the interests of God's kingdom among men, it is at their peril if they do not; for, (v. 12.) *The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish*; not that they must perish by the sword, or by human anathemas; or as if this gave any countenance to the using of external force for the propagating of the gospel; or as if men might be compelled by penalties and punishment to come into the church; by no means. But those who will not by faith submit to Jesus Christ, the king of the church, and serve him, they shall perish eternally, Ps. ii. 12. They that will not be subject to Christ's golden sceptre, to the government of his word and Spirit, that will not be brought under, or kept in, by the discipline of his family, shall be broken in pieces by his iron rod; *Bring them forth, and slay them before me*, Luke xix. 27. Nations of such shall be utterly and eternally wasted, when Christ comes to take vengeance on those that *obey not his gospel*, 2 Thess. i. 8.

5. There shall be abundance of beauty added to the ordinances of divine worship; (v. 13.) *The glory of Lebanon*, the strong and stately cedars that grow there, *shall come unto thee*, as of old to Solomon, when he built the temple; (2 Chron. ii. 16.) and with them other timber shall be brought, proper for the carved work thereof, which the enemy had broken down, Ps. lxxiv. 5, 6. The temple, the *place of God's sanctuary*, shall be not only rebuilt, but beautified. It is the *place of his feet*, where he rests and resides, Ezek. xliii. 7. The ark is called his *footstool*, because it was under the mercy-seat, Ps. cxxii. 7. This he will make glorious in the eyes of his people and of all their neighbours. *The glory of the latter house*, to which this refers, though in many instances inferior, was yet really *greater than the glory of the former*, because Christ came to that temple, Mal. iii. 1. It was likewise *adorned with goodly stones and gifts*, (Luke xxi. 5.) to which this promise may have some reference; yet so slightly did Christ speak of them there, that we must suppose it to have its full accomplishment in the beauties of holiness, and the graces and comforts of the Spirit, with which gospel-ordinances are adorned and enriched.

6. The church shall appear truly great and

honourable, v. 14. The people of the Jews, after their return out of captivity, by degress became more considerable, and made a better figure, than one would have expected, after they had been so much reduced, and than any of the other nations recovered, that had been in like manner humbled by the Chaldeans. It is probable that many of those who had oppressed them in Babylon, when they were themselves driven out by the Persians, made their court to the Jews for shelter and supply, and were willing to scrape acquaintance with them. It is further fulfilled, when those that have been enemies to the church are wrought upon by the grace of God to see their error, and come, and join themselves to it; "*The sons of them that afflicted thee*, if not they themselves, yet their children, shall crouch to thee, shall beg pardon for their folly, and beg an interest in thy favour, and admission into thy family," 1 Sam. ii. 36. A promise like this is made to the church of Philadelphia, Rev. iii. 9. And it is intended to be, (1.) A mortification to the proud oppressors of the church, that have afflicted her, and despised her, and taken a pleasure in doing it; they shall be brought down, their spirits shall be broken, and their condition shall be so mean and miserable, that they shall be glad to be obliged to those whom they have most studied to disoblige. Note, Sooner or later God will pour contempt upon those that put contempt upon his people. (2.) An exaltation to the poor, oppressed ones of the church; and this is the honour that shall be done them, they shall have an opportunity of doing good to those who have done evil to them, and saving those alive who have afflicted and despised them. It is a pleasure to a good man, and he accounts it an honour, to show mercy to those with whom he has found no mercy. Yet this is not all; "They shall not only become supplicants to thee for their own interest, but they shall give honour to thee; *they shall call thee, The city of the Lord*; they shall at length be convinced that thou art a favourite of Heaven, and the particular care of the Divine Providence." That city is truly great and honourable, it is strong, it is rich, it is safe, it is beautiful, it is the most desirable place that can be to live in, which is *the city of the Lord*, which he owns, in which he dwells, in which religion is uppermost; such a one is Zion, it is the place which God has chosen, to put his name there, it is *the Zion of the Holy One of Israel*; therefore, we may be sure, a holy city, else the Holy One of Israel would never be called the Patron of it.

15. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through *thee*, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. 16. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breasts of kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD *am* thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. 17. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. 18. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders: but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. 19. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an

everlasting light, and thy God thy glory; 20. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. 21. Thy people also *shall be* all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. 22. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time.

The happy and glorious state of the church is here further foretold, referring principally and ultimately to the Christian church, and the spiritual peace of that; but under the type of that little gleam of outward peace, which the Jews sometimes enjoyed after their return out of captivity. This is here spoken of,

1. As compared with what it had been; *this* made her peace and honour the more pleasant, that her condition had been much otherwise.

1. She had been despised; but now she should be honoured, v. 15, 16. Jerusalem had been forsaken and hated, abandoned by her friends, abhorred by her enemies, no man went through that desolate city, but declined it as a rueful spectacle; it was an *astonishment and hissing*. But now it shall be made an eternal excellency, being reformed from idolatry, and having recovered the tokens of God's favour, and it shall be the joy of good people for many generations. Yet considering how short Jerusalem's excellency was, and how short it came of the vast compass of this promise, we must look for the full accomplishment of it in the perpetual excellencies of the gospel-church, far exceeding those of the Old Testament church, and the glorious privileges and advantages of the Christian religion, which are indeed the joy of many generations.

Two things are here spoken of as her excellency and joy, in opposition to her having been forsaken and hated. (1.) She shall find herself countenanced by her neighbours. The nations, and their kings, that are brought to embrace Christianity, shall lay themselves out for the good of the church, and maintain its interests, with the tenderness and affection that the nurse shows to the child at her breast; (v. 16.) "*Thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles*; not suck their blood, that is not the spirit of the gospel; *thou shalt suck the breast of kings*, who shall be to thee as nursing fathers." (2.) She shall find herself countenanced by her God; "*Thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer*. shalt know it by experience: for such a salvation, such a redemption, shall be wrought out for thee, as plainly discovers itself to be the work of the Lord, the work of a mighty one, for it is a great salvation; of the *Mighty One of Jacob*, for it secures the welfare of all those that are Israelites indeed." They before knew the Lord to be their God, now they know him to be their Saviour, their Redeemer. Their Holy One now appears their Mighty One.

2. She had been impoverished; but now she shall be enriched, and every thing shall be changed for the better with her, v. 17. When those who were raised out of the dust are set among princes, instead of brass, they have money in their purses, they have gold and silver vessels in their houses instead of iron ones, and other improvements agreeable: so much shall the spiritual glory of the New Testament church exceed the external pomp and splendour of the Jewish economy, which had no glory in comparison with that which quite excels it, 2 Cor.

iii. 10. When we had baptism in the room of circumcision, the Lord's supper in the room of the passover, and a gospel-ministry in the room of a Levitical priesthood, we had gold instead of brass. Sin turned gold into brass, when Rehoboam made brazen shields instead of the golden ones he had pawned; but God's favour, when that returns, will turn brass again into gold.

3. She had been oppressed by her own princes, which was sadly complained of, not only as her sin, but as her misery; (*ch. lix. 14.*) but now all the grievances of that kind shall be redressed; (*v. 17.*) "*I will make thine officers peace; men of peace shall be made officers, and shall be indeed justices, not patrons of injustice, and justices of peace, not instruments of trouble and vexation. They shall be peace, they shall sincerely seek thy welfare, and by their means thou shalt enjoy good.*" They shall be *peace*, for they shall be righteousness; and *then* the peace is as a river, when the righteousness is as the waves of the sea. Even exactors, whose business it is to demand the public tribute, though they be exact, must not be exacting, but must be just to the subject as well as to the prince, and, according to the instructions John Baptist gave to the publicans, must *exact no more than is appointed them*, Luke iii. 13.

4. She had been insulted by her neighbours, invaded, spoiled, and plundered; but now it shall be so no more; (*v. 18.*) "*Violence shall no more be heard in thy land; neither the threats and triumphs of those that do violence, nor the outcries and complaints of those that suffer violence, shall again be heard, but every man shall peaceably enjoy his own. There shall be no wasting or destruction, either of persons or possessions, any where within thy borders, but thy walls shall be called salvation, they shall be safe, and means of safety to thee, and thy gates shall be praise, praise to thee, every one shall commend thee for the good condition they are kept in; and praise to thy God, who strengthens the bars of thy gates.*" Ps. cxlvii. 13. When God's salvation is upon the walls, it is fit that his praises should be in the gates, the places of concourse.

II. As completed in what it shall be: it should seem that in the close of this chapter we are directed to look further yet, as far forward as to the glory and happiness of heaven, under the type and figure of the flourishing state of the church on earth, which yet was never such as to come to any thing near to what is here foretold; and divers of the images and expressions here made use of we find in the description of the *new Jerusalem*, Rev. xxi. 23.—xxii. 5. As the prophets sometimes insensibly pass from the blessings of the Jewish church to the spiritual blessings of the Christian church, which are eternal; so sometimes they rise from the church militant to the church triumphant, where, and where only, all the promised peace and joy and honour will be in perfection.

1. God shall be all in all in the happiness here promised; so he is always to true believers; (*v. 19.*) *The sun and the moon shall be no more thy light.* God's people, when they enjoy his favour, and walk in the light of his countenance, make little account of sun and moon, and other lights of this world, but could walk comfortably in the light of the Lord, though they should withdraw their shining. In heaven there shall be no occasion for sun or moon, for it is the inheritance of the saints in light, such light as will swallow up the light of the sun, as easily as the sun does that of a candle. "Idolaters worshipped the sun and moon; (which some have thought the most ancient and plausible idolatry;) but those *shall be no more thy light*, shall no more be idolized; but the Lord shall be to thee a constant Light, both day and night, in the night of adversity,

as well as in the day of prosperity." Those that make God their only Light, shall have him their all-sufficient Light; their *Sun and Shield; thy God, thy Glory.* Note, God is the Glory of those whose God he is, and will be so to eternity. It is their glory, that they have him for their God, and they glory in it: it is to them instead of beauty. God's people are, upon this account, an honourable people, that they have an interest in God as theirs in covenant.

2. The happiness here promised shall know no change, period, or allay; (*v. 20.*) "*The sun shall no more go down, but it shall be eternal day, eternal sunshine, with thee; that shall not be thy sun, which is sometimes eclipsed, often clouded, and, though it shine ever so bright, ever so warm, will certainly set, and leave thee in the dark, in the cold, in a few hours; but he shall be a Sun, a Fountain of light to thee, who is himself the Father of all lights, with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning.*" James i. 17. We read of the sun's standing still once, and not hasting to go down, for the space of a day, and it was a glorious day, never was the like; but what was that to the day that shall never have a night? Or if it had, it should be a light night; for *neither shall the moon withdraw itself, it shall never wane, shall never change, but be always at the full.* The comforts and joys that are in heaven, the glories provided for the soul, as the light of the sun, and those prepared for the glorified body too, as the light of the moon, shall never know the least cessation or interruption; how should they, when *the Lord shall himself be thine everlasting light*—a light which never wastes, nor can ever be extinguished. *And the days of thy mourning shall be ended*, so as never to return; for *all tears shall be wiped away*, and the fountains of them, sin and affliction, dried up, so that *sorrow and sighing shall flee away* for ever.

3. Those that are entitled to this happiness, being duly prepared and qualified for it, shall never be put out of the possession of it; (*v. 21.*) *Thy people, that shall inhabit this New Jerusalem, shall all be righteous, all justified by the righteousness of the Messiah, all sanctified by his Spirit; all that people, that Jerusalem, must be righteous, must have that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.* They are all righteous, for we know that *the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* There are no people on earth that are all righteous; there is a mixture of some bad in the best societies on this side heaven; but there are no mixtures there. They shall be *all righteous*; they shall be entirely righteous; as there shall be none corrupt among them, so there shall be no corruption in them; the *spirits of just men* shall there be *made perfect.* And they shall be *all the righteous* together, that shall replenish the New Jerusalem; it is called the *congregation of the righteous*, Ps. i. 5. And because they are *all righteous*, therefore *they shall inherit the land for ever*, for nothing but sin can turn them out of it. The perfection of the saints' holiness secures the perpetuity of their happiness.

4. The glory of the church shall redound to the honour of the church's God; "They shall appear to be the *branch of my planting, the work of my hands*, and I will own them as such." It was by the grace of God that they were designed to this happiness; they are *the branch of his planting*, or of his plantations; he broke them off from the wild olive, and grafted them into the good olive; transplanted them out of the field, when they were as tender branches, into his nursery; that, being now planted in his *garden on earth*, they might shortly be removed to his *paradise in heaven.* It was by his grace likewise that they were prepared and fitted

tor this happiness; they are the work of his hands, (Eph. ii. 10.) are wrought to the self-same thing, 2 Cor. v. 5. It is a work of time, and, when it shall be finished, will appear a work of wonder; and God will be glorified, who began it, and carried it on; for the Lord Jesus will then be admired in all them that believe. God will glorify himself in glorifying his chosen.

5. They will appear the more glorious, and God will be the more glorified in them, if we compare what they are with what they were; the happiness they are arrived at with the smallness of their beginning; (v. 22.) *A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation.* The captives that returned out of Babylon strangely multiplied, and became a strong nation. The Christian church was a little one, a very small one at first, the number of their names was once but an hundred and twenty; yet it became a thousand; the stone cut out of the mountain without hands swelled so as to fill the earth. The triumphant church, and every glorified saint, will be a thousand out of a little one, a strong nation out of a small one. The grace and peace of the saints were at first like a grain of mustard seed, but they increase and multiply, and make a little one to become a thousand, the weak to be as David; when they come to heaven, and look back upon the smallness of their beginning, they will wonder how they got thither. And so wonderful is all this promise, that it needed the ratification with which it is closed; *I the Lord will hasten it in his time*—all that is here said relating to the Jewish and Christian church, to the militant and triumphant church, and to every particular believer. (1.) It may seem too difficult to be brought about, and therefore may be despair'd of; but the God of almighty power has undertaken it; "*I the Lord will do it, who can do it, and who have determined to do it.*" It will be done by him whose power is irresistible, and his purposes unalterable. (2.) It may seem to be delayed, and put off, so long, that we are out of hopes of it; but as the Lord will do it, so he will hasten it, will do it with all convenient speed; though much time may be passed before it is done, no time shall be lost; he will hasten it in its time, in the proper time, in the season wherein it will be beautiful; he will do it in the time appointed by his wisdom, though not in the time prescribed by our folly. And this is really hastening it; for though it seem to tarry, it does not tarry if it come in God's time; for we are sure that that is the best time, which he that believes will patiently wait for.

## CHAP. LXI.

In this chapter, I. We are sure to find the grace of Christ, published by himself to a lost world in the everlasting gospel, under the type and figure of Isaiah's province, which was to foretell the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, v. 1. . 3. II. We think we find the glories of the church of Christ, its spiritual glories, described under the type and figure of the Jews' prosperity after their return out of their captivity. 1. It is promised that the decays of the church shall be repaired, v. 4. 2. That those from without shall be made serviceable to the church, v. 5. 3. That the church shall be a royal priesthood, maintained by the riches of the Gentiles, v. 6. 4. That she shall have honour and joy in lieu of all her shame and sorrow, v. 7. 5. That her affairs shall prosper, v. 8. 6. That posterity shall enjoy these blessings, v. 9. 7. That righteousness and salvation shall be the eternal matter of the church's rejoicing and thanksgiving, v. 10, 11. If the Jewish church was ever thus blessed, much more shall the Christian church be so, and all that belong to it.

1. **T**HE Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek:

he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; 2. To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; 3. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called Trees of Righteousness, The Planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

He that is the best Expositor of scripture, has, no doubt, given us the best exposition of these verses, even our Lord Jesus himself, who read this in the synagogue of Nazareth, (perhaps it was the lessor for the day,) and applied it entirely to himself, saying, *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears;* (Luke iv. 17, 18, 21.) and the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, in the opening of this text, were admired by all that heard them. As Isaiah was authorized and directed to proclaim liberty to the Jews in Babylon, so was Christ, God's Messenger, to publish a more joyful jubilee to a lost world. And here we are told,

I. How he was fitted and qualified for this work; *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, v. 1.* The prophets had the Spirit of God moving them at times, both instructing them what to say, and exciting them to say it: but Christ had the Spirit always resting on him without measure; but to the same intent that the prophets had, as a Spirit of counsel, and a Spirit of courage, ch. xi. 1.—3. When he entered upon the execution of his prophetic office, the Spirit, as a dove, descended upon him, Matth. iii. 16. This Spirit which was upon him, he communicated to those whom he sent to proclaim the same glad tidings, saying to them, when he gave them their commission, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*, thereby ratifying it.

II. How he was appointed and ordained to it; *The Spirit of God is upon me, because the Lord God has anointed me.* What service God called him to he furnished him for; therefore he gave him his Spirit, because he had by a sacred and solemn unction set him apart to this great office, as kings and priests were of old destined to their offices by anointing. Hence the Redeemer was called the *Messiah*, the *Christ*, because he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. He has sent me; our Lord Jesus did not go unsent, he had a commission from him that is the Fountain of power; the Father sent him, and gave him commandment. This is a great satisfaction to us, that, whatever Christ said, he had a warrant from heaven for; his doctrine was not his, but his that sent him.

III. What the work was, to which he was appointed and ordained.

1. He was to be a Preacher, was to execute the office of a prophet. So well pleased was he with the good will God showed toward men through him, that he would himself be the Preacher of it; that an honour might thereby be put upon the ministry of the gospel, and the faith of the saints might be confirmed and encouraged. He must preach good tidings (so gospel signifies) to the meek, to the penitent, and humble, and poor in spirit; to them the tidings of a Redeemer will be indeed good tidings, pure gospel, faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptance. The poor are commonly best disposed to receive the gospel; (Jam. ii. 5.) and then it is likely to profit us, when it is received with meek

ness, as it ought to be; to such Christ preached good tidings when he said, *Blessed are the meek.*

2. He was to be a Healer; he was sent to *bind up the broken-hearted*, as pained limbs are rolled to give them ease, as broken bones and bleeding wounds are bound up, that they may knit and close again. Those whose hearts are broken for sin, who are truly humbled under the sense of guilt and dread of wrath, are furnished in the gospel of Christ with that which will make them: easy, and silence their fears. Those only who have experienced the pains of a penitential contrition, may expect the pleasure of divine cordials and consolations.

3. He was to be a Deliverer; he was sent as a Prophet to preach, as a Priest to heal, and as a King to issue out proclamations; and those of two kinds;

(1.) Proclamations of peace to his friends; He shall *proclaim liberty to the captives*, (as Cyrus did to the Jews in captivity,) and *the opening of the prison to them that were bound*. Whereas by the *guilt of sin we are bound over* to the justice of God, are his *lawful captives, sold for sin till payment be made of that great debt*, Christ lets us know that he has made satisfaction to divine justice for that debt, that his satisfaction is accepted, and if we will plead that, and depend upon it, and make over ourselves and all we have to him, in a grateful sense of the kindness he has done us, we may by faith sue out our pardon, and take the comfort of it; there is, and shall be, *no condemnation to us*. And whereas by the dominion of sin in us we are bound under the power of Satan, sold under sin, Christ lets us know that he has conquered Satan, *has destroyed him that had the power of death, and his works*, and provided for us grace sufficient to enable us to shake off the yoke of sin, and to loose ourselves from *those bands of our neck*. The Son is ready by his Spirit to *make us free*; and then we shall be *free indeed*, not only discharged from the miseries of captivity, but advanced to all the immunities and dignities of citizens. This is the gospel-proclamation, and it is like the blowing of the jubilee-trumpet, which proclaimed the great year of release, (Lev. xxv. 9, 40.) in allusion to which it is here called the *acceptable year of the Lord*, the time of our acceptance with God, which is the original of our liberties; or it is called the *year of the Lord*, because it publishes his free grace, to his own glory, and an *acceptable year*, because it brings glad tidings to us, and what cannot but be very acceptable to those who know the capacities and necessities of their own souls.

(2.) Proclamations of war against his enemies. Christ proclaims *the day of vengeance of our God*; the vengeance he takes, [1.] On sin and Satan, death and hell, and all the powers of darkness, that were to be destroyed in order to our deliverance; these Christ triumphed over in his cross, having spoiled and weakened them, shamed them, and *made a show of them openly*, therein *taking vengeance* on them for all the injury they had done both to God and man, Col. ii. 15. [2.] On those of the children of men, that stand it out against those fair offers; they shall not only be left, as they deserve, in their captivity, but be dealt with as enemies; we have the gospel summed up, Mark xvi. 16. where that part of it, *He that believes shall be saved*, proclaims the *acceptable year of the Lord* to those that will accept of it; but the other part, *He that believes not shall be damned*, proclaims the *day of vengeance of our God*, that vengeance which he will take of those that *obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ*, 2 Thess. i. 8.

4. He was to be a Comforter, and so he is, as Preacher, Healer, and Deliverer; he is sent to *comfort all who mourn*, and who, mourning, seek to him, and not to the world, for comfort. Christ not only provides comfort for them, and proclaims it,

but he applies it to them; he does by his Spirit comfort them. There is enough in him to *comfort all who mourn*, whatever their sore or sorrow is; but this comfort is sure to them who *mourn in Zion*, who sorrow *after a godly sort*, according to God, for his residence is in Zion; who *mourn because of Zion's calamities and desolations*, and mingle their tears by a holy sympathy with those of all God's suffering people, though they themselves are not in trouble; such tears God has *a bottle for*, (Ps. lvi. 8.) such mourners he has comfort in store for. As *blessings out of Zion* are spiritual blessings, so *mourners in Zion* are holy mourners; such as carry their sorrows to the throne of grace, (for in Zion was the mercy-seat,) and pour them out as Hannah did before the Lord. To such as these Christ has appointed by his gospel, and will give by his Spirit, (v. 3.) those consolations which will not only support them under their sorrows, but turn them into songs of praise. He will give them, (1.) *Beauty for ashes*; whereas they lay in ashes, as was usual in times of great mourning, they shall not only be raised out of their dust, but made to look pleasant. Note, The holy cheerfulness of Christians is their beauty, and a great ornament to their profession. Here is an elegant *anonomasia* in the original; He will give them *sheer—beauty*, for *epher—ashes*; he will turn their sorrow into joy, as quickly and as easily as you can transpose a letter; for he speaks, and it is done. (2.) The *oil of joy*, which *makes the face to shine*, instead of *mourning*, which *disfigures the countenance*, and makes it unlovely. This *oil of joy* the saints have from that *oil of gladness* with which Christ himself was *anointed above his fellows*, Heb. i. 9. (3.) The *garments of praise*, such beautiful garments as were worn on thanksgiving days, instead of the *spirit of heaviness, dimness, or contraction*; open joys for secret mournings. The *spirit of heaviness* they keep to themselves; (Zion's mourners *weep in secret*;) but the joy they are recompensed with, they are *clothed with* as with a garment in the eye of others. Observe, Where God gives the *oil of joy*, he gives the *garment of praise*. Those comforts which come from God, dispose the heart to, and enlarge the heart in, thanksgivings to God. Whatever we have the joy of, God must have the praise and glory of.

5. He was to be a Planter; for the church is God's husbandry. Therefore he will do all this for his people, will cure their wounds, release them out of bondage, and comfort them in their sorrows, *that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord*, that they may be such, and be acknowledged to be such; that they may be ornaments to God's vineyard, and may be *fruitful in the fruits of righteousness*, as the branches of *God's planting*, ch. lx. 21. All that Christ does for us, is to make us God's people, and some way serviceable to him as *living trees*, planted in the *house of the Lord*, and *flourishing in the courts of our God*; and all this, *that he may be glorified*; that we may be brought to glorify him by a sincere devotion and an exemplary conversation; for *herein is our Father glorified, that we bring forth much fruit*; and that others also may take occasion from God's favour shining on his people, and his grace shining in them, to praise him; and that he might be for ever *glorified in his saints*.

4. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. 5. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your ploughmen, and your vine-dressers. 6. But



ye shall be named the priests of the LORD; *min* shall call you the ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall you boast yourselves. 7. For your shame you *shall have* double, and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double; everlasting joy shall be unto them. 8. For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt-offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. 9. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed.

Promises are here made to the Jews now returned out of captivity, and settled again in their own land, which are to be extended to the gospel-church, and all believers, who through grace are delivered out of spiritual thralldom; for they are capable of being spiritually applied.

1. It is promised that their houses shall be rebuilt, (v. 4.) that their cities shall be raised out of the ruins in which they had long lain, and be fitted up for their use again; *They shall build the old wastes; the old wastes shall be built, the waste cities shall be repaired, the former desolations, even the desolations of many generations, which, it was feared, would never be repaired, shall be raised up.* The setting up of Christianity in the world repaired the decays of natural religion, and raised up those desolations both of piety and honesty, which had been for many generations the reproach of mankind. An unsanctified soul is like a city that is broken down, and has no walls, like a house in ruins; but by the power of Christ's gospel and grace it is repaired, it is put in order again, and fitted to be an habitation of God through the Spirit. And they shall do this, they that are released out of captivity; for we are brought out of the house of bondage, that we may serve God, both in building up ourselves to his glory, and in helping to build up his church on earth.

2. They that were so lately servants themselves, working for their oppressors, and lying at their mercy, shall now have servants to do their work for them and be at their command; not of their brethren, (they are all the Lord's freemen,) but of the *strangers, and the sons of the alien, who shall keep their sheep, till their ground, and dress their gardens, the ancient employments of Abel, Cain, and Adam; Strangers shall feed your flocks, v. 5.* When, by the grace of God, we attain to a holy indifference as to all the affairs of this world, *buying as though they possessed not*, when, though our hands are employed about them, our hearts are not entangled with them, but reserved entire for God and his service, then the *sons of the alien are our ploughmen and vine-dressers.*

3. They shall not only be released out of their captivity, but highly preferred, and honourably employed; (v. 6.) "While the strangers are *keeping your flocks*, you shall be *keeping the charge of the sanctuary*; instead of being slaves to your taskmasters, you shall be named the *priests of the Lord*, a high and holy calling." Priests were princes, peers, and in Hebrew were called by the same name. You shall be the *ministers of our God*, as the Levites were. Note, Those whom God sets at liberty, he sets to work: he delivers them out of the

hands of their enemies, that they may serve him, Luke i. 74, 75. Ps. cxvi. 16. But his service is perfect freedom, nay, it is the greatest honour. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, he took them to be to him a *kingdom of priests*, Exod. xix. 6. And the gospel-church is a *royal priesthood*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. All believers are made to our God kings and priests; and they ought to conduct themselves as such in their devotions and in their whole conversation, with holiness to the Lord written upon their foreheads, that men may call them the *priests of the Lord*.

4. The wealth and honour of the Gentile converts shall redound to the benefit and credit of the church, v. 6. *The Gentiles shall be brought into the church, those that were strangers shall become fellow-citizens with the saints, and with themselves they shall bring all they have, to be devoted to the glory of God, and used in his service; and the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall have the advantage of it. It will be a great strengthening and quickening, as well as a comfort and encouragement, to all good Christians, to see the Gentiles serving the interest of God's kingdom. (1.) They shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, not which they have themselves seized by violence, but which is fairly and honourably presented to them, as gifts brought to the altar, which the priests and their families lived comfortably upon. It is not said, "Ye shall hoard the riches of the Gentiles, and treasure it," but, "Ye shall eat it;" for there is nothing better in riches than to use them, and to do good with them. (2.) They shall boast themselves in their glory. Whatever was the honour of the Gentile converts before their conversion, their nobility, estates, learning, virtue, or places of trust and power, it shall all turn to the reputation of the church to which they were joined themselves; and whatever is their glory after their conversion, their holy zeal, and strictness of conversation, their usefulness, their patient suffering, and all the displays of that blessed change which divine grace has made in them, shall be very much for the glory of God, and therefore all good men shall glory in it.*

5. They shall have abundance of comfort and satisfaction in their own bosoms; (v. 7.) the Jews, no doubt, were thus privileged after their return; they were in a new world, and now knew how to value their liberty and property, the pleasures of which were continually fresh and blooming. Much more do all those rejoice, whom Christ has brought into the glorious liberty of God's children, especially when the privileges of their adoption shall be completed in the resurrection of the body. (1.) *They shall rejoice in their portion*; they shall not only have their own again, but (which is a further gift of God) they shall have the comfort of it, and a heart to rejoice in it, Eccl. iii. 13. Though the houses of the returned Jews, as well as their temple, be much inferior to what they were before the captivity, yet they shall be well pleased with them, and thankful for them. It is a portion in their land, their own land, the Holy land, Immanuel's land, and therefore they shall rejoice in it, having so lately known what it was to be *strangers in a strange land*. They that have God and heaven for their portion, have reason to say that they have a worthy portion, and to rejoice in it. (2.) *Everlasting joy shall be unto them*; a joyful state of their people, which shall last long, much longer than the captivity had lasted. Yet that joy of the Jewish nation was so much allayed, so often interrupted, and so soon brought to an end, that we must look for the accomplishment of this promise in the spiritual joy which believers have in God, and the eternal joy they hope for in heaven. (3.) This shall be a double recompense to them, and more than double, for all the reproach and vexation they have lain under in

the land of their captivity; "*For your shame you shall have double honour, and in your land you shall possess double wealth, to what you lost; the blessing of God upon it, and the comfort you shall have in it, shall make an abundant reparation for all the damages you have received. You shall be owned not only as God's sons, but as his first-born, (Exod. iv. 22.) and therefore entitled to a double portion.*" As the miseries of their captivity were so great, that in them they are said to have received *double for all their sins, (ch. xl. 2.)* so the joys of their return shall be so great, that in them they shall receive *double for all their shame.* The former is applicable to the fulness of Christ's satisfaction, in which God received *double for all their sins;* the latter to the fulness of heaven's joys, in which we shall receive more than *double for all our services* and sufferings. Job's case illustrates this; when God *turned again his captivity,* he gave him *twice as much as he had before.*

6. God will be their faithful Guide, and a God in covenant with them; (v. 8.) *I will direct their work in truth.* God by his providence will order their affairs for the best, according to the word of his truth; he will guide them in the ways of true prosperity, by the rules of true policy; he will by his grace direct the works of good people in the right way, the true way that leads to happiness; he will direct them to be done in sincerity, and then they are pleasing to him. *God desires truth in the inward parts;* and if we do our works in truth, he will *make an everlasting covenant with us;* for to those that *walk before him and are upright,* he will certainly be a *God all-sufficient.* Now as a reason both of this and of the foregoing promise, that God will recompense to them *double for their shame,* those words come in in the former part of the verse, *I the Lord love judgment:* he loves that judgment should be done among men, both between magistrates and subjects, and between neighbour and neighbour, and therefore he hates all injustice; and when wrongs are done to his people by their oppressors and persecutors, he is displeased with them, not only because they are done to his people, but because they are wrongs, and against the eternal rules of equity. If men do not do justice, he loves to do judgment himself, in righting them that suffer wrong, and punishing them that do it. God pleads his people's injured cause, not only because he is jealous for them, but because he is jealous for justice. To illustrate this, it is added, that he *hates robbery for burnt-offering;* he hates injustice even in his own people, that honour him with what they have in their burnt-offerings, much more does he hate it when it is *against* his own people; if he hates robbery when it is for burnt-offerings to himself, much more when it is for burnt-offerings to idols, and when not only his people are robbed of their estates, but he is robbed of his offerings. It is a truth much to the honour of God, that ritual services will never atone for the violation of moral precepts, nor will it justify any man's robbery to say, "*It was for burnt-offerings;*" or *Corban—It is a gift.* Behold, *to obey is better than sacrifice, to do justly and love mercy better than thousands of rams;* nay, that robbery is most hateful to God, which is covered with this pretence, for it makes the righteous God to be the Patron of unrighteousness. Some make this a reason of the rejection of the Jews, upon the bringing in of the Gentiles, (v. 6.) because they were so corrupt in their morals, and while they tithed mint and cummin, made nothing of *judgment and mercy;* (Matth. xxiii. 23.) whereas *God loves judgment,* and insists upon that, and he hates both *robbery for burnt-offerings, and burnt-offerings for robbery too,* as that of the Pharisees, who made long prayers, that they might the more plausibly devour wi-

dows' houses. Others read these words thus, *I hate rapine by iniquity,* the spoil which the enemies of God's people had unjustly made of them; God hated this, and therefore would reckon with them for it.

7. God will entail a blessing upon their posterity after them; (v. 9.) *Their seed,* the children of these persons themselves that are now the blessed of the Lord, or their successors in profession, the church's seed, shall be *accounted to the Lord for a generation,* Ps. xxii. 30. (1.) They shall signalize themselves, and make their neighbours to take notice of them; *they shall be known among the Gentiles;* shall *distinguish themselves* by the gravity, seriousness, humility, and cheerfulness of their conversation, especially by that brotherly love by which all men shall know them to be Christ's disciples. And they thus distinguishing themselves, God shall dignify them, by making them the blessings of their age and instruments of his glory, and by giving them remarkable tokens of his favour, which shall make them eminent, and gain them respect from all about them. Let the children of godly parents love in such a manner that they may be known to be such, that all who observe them may see in them the fruits of a good education, and an answer to the prayers that were put up for them; and then they may expect that God will make them known, by the fulfilling of that promise to them, *that the generation of the upright shall be blessed.* (2.) God shall have the glory of this, for every one shall attribute it to the blessing of God; all that see them shall see so much of the grace of God in them, and his favour toward them, that they shall *acknowledge them to be the seed which the Lord has blessed,* and doth bless, for it includes both. See what it is to be blessed of God. Whatever good appears in any, it must be taken notice of as the fruit of God's blessing, and he must be glorified in it.

10. I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. 11. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

Some make this the song of joy and praise to be sung by the prophet in the name of Jerusalem, congratulating her on the happy change of her circumstances in the accomplishment of the foregoing promises; others make it to be spoken by Christ in the name of the New Testament church triumphing in gospel grace. We may take in both, the former a type of the latter. We are here taught to rejoice with holy joy, to God's honour.

1. In the beginning of this god work, the clothing of the church *with righteousness and salvation;* (v. 10.) Upon this account *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.* Those that rejoice in God have cause to rejoice greatly, and we need not fear running into an extreme in the greatness of our joy, when we make God the *Gladness of our joy.* The first gospel song begins like this, *My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour,* Luke i. 46, 47. There is just matter for this joy, and all the reason in the world why it should terminate in God, for salvation and righteousness

are wrought out and brought in, and the church is clothed with it. The salvation God wrought for the Jews, that righteousness of his in which he appeared for them, and that reformation which appeared among them, made them look as glorious in the eyes of all wise men as if they had been clothed in robes of state, or nuptial garments. Christ has clothed his church with an eternal salvation, (and that is truly great,) by clothing it with the righteousness both of justification and sanctification; the *clean linen is the righteousness of saints*, Rev. xix. 8. Observe how these two are put together; those, and those only, shall be clothed with the garments of salvation hereafter, that are covered with the *robe of righteousness now*: and those garments are rich and splendid clothing, like the priestly garments (for so the word signifies) with which the *bridegroom decks himself*; the brightness of the sun itself is compared to them, Ps. xix. 5. *He is as a bridegroom* coming out of his chamber, completely dressed; such is the beauty of God's grace in those that are clothed with the *robe of righteousness*, that by the righteousness of Christ are recommended to God's favour, and by the sanctification of the Spirit have God's image renewed upon them; they are decked as a bride to be espoused to God, and taken into covenant with him; they are decked as a priest to be employed for God, and taken into communion with him.

2. In the progress and continuance of this good work, v. 11. It is not like a day of triumph, which is glorious for the present, but is soon over, no, the righteousness and salvation with which the church is clothed, are *durable clothing*; so are they said to be, ch. xxiii. 18. The church, when she is pleasing herself with the righteousness and salvation that Jesus Christ has clothed her with, rejoices to think that these inestimable blessings shall both spring for future ages, and spread to distant regions. (1.) They shall spring forth for ages to come, as the fruits of the earth which are produced every year from generation to generation; as the earth, even that which lies common, *brings forth her bud*, the tender grass, at the return of the year, and as the *garden enclosed causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth* in their season, so duly, so constantly, so powerfully, and with such advantage to mankind, *will the Lord God cause righteousness and praise to spring forth*, by virtue of the covenant of grace, as, in the former case, by virtue of the covenant of providence. See what the promised blessings are—*righteousness and praise*; (for they that are clothed with righteousness *show forth the praises* of him that clothed them;) these shall spring forth under the influence of the dew of divine grace. Though it may sometimes be winter with the church, when those blessings seem to wither, and do not appear, yet the root of them is fixed, a spring-time will come, when through the reviving beams of the approaching Sun of righteousness they shall flourish again. (2.) They shall spread far, and spring forth, *before all the nations*; the great salvation shall be published and proclaimed to all the world, and the ends of the earth shall see it.

## CHAP. LXII.

The business of prophets was both to preach and pray. In this chapter, I. The prophet determines to apply himself closely and constantly to this business, v. 1. II. God appoints him and others of his prophets to continue to do so, for the encouragement of his people during the delays of their deliverance, v. 6, 7. III. The promises are here repeated and ratified of the great things God would do for his church; for the Jews after their return out of captivity, and for the Christian church when it shall be set up in the world. 1. The church shall be made honourable in the eyes of the world, v. 2. 2. It shall appear to be very dear to God, precious and honourable in his sight, v. 3.-5. 3. It shall enjoy great

plenty, v. 8, 9. 4. It shall be released out of captivity, and grow up again into a considerable nation, particularly owned and favoured by Heaven, v. 10.-12.

1. **F**OR Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof, as a lamp that burneth. 2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name. 3. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the band of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. 4. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken: neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. 5. For as a young man marieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

The prophet here tells us,

I. What he will do for the church. A prophet, as he is a seer, so he is a spokesman. This prophet here resolves to perform that office faithfully, v. 1. *He will not hold his peace*, he *will not rest*; he will mind his business, will take pains, and never desire to take his ease; and herein he was a type of Christ, who was indefatigable in executing the office of a prophet, and made it his meat and drink till he had finished his work. Observe here, 1. What the prophet's resolution is; *He will not hold his peace*, he will *continue instant in preaching*; will not only faithfully deliver, but frequently repeat, the messages he has received from the Lord. If people receive not the precepts and promises at first, he will inculcate them, and give them line upon line; and he will *continue instant in prayer*, he will never hold his peace at the throne of grace, till he has prevailed with God for the mercies promised; he will *give himself to prayer*, and to the *ministry of the word*, as Christ's ministers must, (Acts vi. 4.) who must labour frequently in both, and never be weary of this well-doing. The business of ministers is to speak from God to his people, and to God for his people; and in neither of these must they be silent. 2. What is the principle of this resolution—for Zion's sake, and for Jerusalem's; not for the sake of any private interest of his own, but for the church's sake, because he has an affection and concern for Zion, and it lies near his heart: whatever becomes of his own house and family, he desires to see the good of Jerusalem, and resolves to seek it all the days of his life, Ps. cxxii. 8, 9.—cxxxviii. 5. It is God's Zion, and his Jerusalem, and it is therefore dear to him, because it is so to God, and because God's glory is interested in its prosperity. 3. How long he resolves to continue this importunity—till the promise of the church's righteousness and salvation, given in the foregoing chapter, be accomplished. Isaiah will not himself live to see the release of the captives out of Babylon, much less the bringing in of the gospel, in which *grace reigns through righteousness unto life and salvation*, yet he will *not hold his peace till* these be accomplished, even the utmost of them, because his prophecies will continue speaking of these things, and there shall in every age be a remnant that shall continue to pray for them, as

successors to him, till the promises be performed, and so the prayers answered that were grounded upon them. Then the church's *righteousness* and *salvation* will go forth as *brightness*, and as a *lamp* that burns; so plainly, that it will carry its own evidence along with it; it will bring *honour* and *comfort* to the church, which will hereupon both look pleasant and appear illustrious; and it will bring *instruction* and *direction* to the world, a light not only to the eyes but to the feet, and to the *paths* of those who before *sat in darkness* and in the *shadow of death*.

II. What God will do for the church; the prophet can but pray and preach, but God will confirm the word, and answer the prayers.

1. The church shall be greatly admired; when that righteousness which is her salvation, her praise, and her glory, shall be brought forth, the *Gentiles* shall see it. The tidings of it shall be carried to the Gentiles, and a tender of it made them; they may so see this righteousness as to share in it, if it be not their own fault; "Even kings shall see and be in love with the *glory of thy righteousness*," (v. 2.) shall overlook the glory of their own courts and kingdoms, and look at, and look after, the spiritual glory of the church as that which excels.

2. She shall be truly admirable. Great names make men considerable in the world, and great respect is paid them thereupon; now it is agreed, that *Honor est in honorate*—*Honour is to be estimated by the character and condition of him who confers it*. God is the Fountain of honour, and from him the church's honour comes; "Thou shalt be called by a new name, a pleasant name, such as thou wast never called by before, no, not in the day of thy greatest prosperity, and the reverse of that which thou wast called by in the day of thine affliction; thou shalt have a new character, be advanced to a new dignity, and those about thee shall have new thoughts of thee." This seems to be alluded to in that promise (Rev. ii. 17.) of the *white stone*, and in the *stone a new name*, and that (Rev. iii. 12.) of the *name of the city of my God*, and my new name. It is a name which the mouth of the Lord shall name, who, we are sure, miscalls nothing, and who will oblige others to call her by the name he has given her; for his judgment is according to truth, and all shall concur with it sooner or later. Two names God shall give her.

(1.) He shall call her *his crown*; (v. 3.) *Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord*, not on his head, as adding any real honour or power to him, as crowns do to those that are crowned with them, but in *his hand*; he is pleased to account them, and show them forth, as a glory and beauty to him. When he took them to be his people, it was that they might be unto him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory; (Jer. xiii. 11.) "Thou shalt be a crown of glory and a royal diadem, through the hand, the good hand, of thy God upon thee; he shall make thee so, for he shall be to thee a Crown of glory, ch. xxviii. 5. Thou shalt be so in his hand, under his protection; he that shall put glory upon thee, shall create a defence upon all that glory, so that the flowers of thy crown shall never be withered, nor its jewels lost."

(2.) He shall call her *his spouse*; (v. 4, 5.) this is a yet greater honour, especially considering what a forlorn condition she had been in. [1.] Her case had been very melancholy; she was called *for-saken*, and her land *desolate*, during the captivity, like a woman reproachfully divorced, or left a disconsolate widow. Such was the state of religion in the world before the preaching of the gospel—it was in a manner forsaken and desolate, a thing that no man looked after, or had any real concern for.

[2.] It should now be very pleasant, for God would return in mercy to her. Instead of those two names of reproach, she shall be called by two honourable names. First, She shall be called *Hephzibah*, which signifies, *My delight is in her*; it was the name of Hezekiah's queen, Manasseh's mother: (2 King. xxi. 1.) a proper name for a wife, who ought to be her husband's delight, Prov. v. 19. And here it is the church's Maker, that is her Husband; *The Lord delights in thee*. God by his grace has wrought that in his church, which makes her his delight, she being refined, and reformed, and brought home to him; and then by his providence he does that for her, which makes it appear that she is his delight, and that he delights to do her good. Secondly, She shall be called *Beulah*, which signifies *married*, whereas she had been desolate, a condition opposed to that of the *married wife*; (ch. lv. 1.) "Thy land shall be married; it shall become fruitful again, and be replenished." Though she has long been barren, she shall again be peopled, shall again be made to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children, Ps. cxiii. 9. *She shall be married*, For, 1. Her sons shall heartily espouse the land of their nativity and its interests, which they had for a long time neglected, as despairing ever to have any comfortable enjoyment of it; *Thy sons shall marry thee*, they shall live with thee, and take delight in thee; when they were in Babylon, they seemed to have espoused that land, for they were appointed to settle, and to seek the peace of it, Jer. xxix. 5.—7. But now they shall again marry their own land, as a young man marries a virgin that he takes great delight in, is extremely fond of, and is likely to have many children by. It bodes well to a land, when its own natives and inhabitants are pleased with it, prefer it before other lands, when its princes marry their country, and resolve to take their lot with it. 2. *Her God* (this is much better) shall betroth her to himself in righteousness, Hosea ii. 19, 20. He will take pleasure in his church; *As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride*, is pleased with his relation to her and her affection to him, *so shall thy God rejoice over thee*, he shall rest in his love to thee, (Zeph. iii. 17.) *he shall take pleasure in thee*, (Ps. cxlviii. 11.) and shall delight to do thee good with his whole heart and his whole soul, Jer. xxxii. 41. This is very applicable to the love Christ has for his church, and for the complacency he takes in it; which appears so bright in Solomon's Song, and which will be complete in heaven.

6. I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence; 7. And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. 8. The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine for the which thou hast laboured: 9. But they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the LORD: and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.

Two things are here promised to Jerusalem.

I. *Plenty of the means of grace*—abundance of good preaching and good praying; (v. 6, 7) and this shows the method God takes when he designs mercy for a people; he first brings them to their duty, and

pours out a spirit of prayer upon them, and then brings salvation to them. Provision is made,

1. That ministers may do their duty as watchmen; it is here spoken of as a token for good, as a step toward further mercy, and an earnest of it, that, in order to what he designed for them, he would set *watchmen on their walls, who should never hold their peace*. Note, (1.) Ministers are watchmen on the church's walls, for it is as a city besieged, whose concern it is to have sentinels on the walls, to take notice, and give notice, of the motions of the enemy. It is necessary that, as watchmen, they be wakeful and faithful, and willing to endure hardness. (2.) They are concerned to stand upon their guard day and night; they must never be off their watch, as long as those for whose souls they watch, are not out of danger. (3.) They must never hold their peace, they must take all opportunities to give warning to sinners, in season, out of season, and must never betray the cause of Christ by a treacherous or cowardly silence; they must never hold their peace at the throne of grace, they must *pray and not faint*, as Moses lifted up his hands, and kept them steady, till Israel had got the victory over Amalek, Exod. xvii. 10, 12.

2. That people may do their duty. As those that make mention of the Lord, let not *them* keep silence neither, let not them think it enough that their watchmen pray for them, but let them pray for themselves; all will be little enough to meet the approaching mercy with due solemnity. Note, (1.) It is the character of God's professing people, that they may make mention of the Lord, and continue to do so even in bad times, when the land is termed *forsaken and desolate*; they are the *Lord's remembrances*; (so the margin reads it;) they remember the Lord themselves, and put one another in mind of him. (2.) God's professing people must be a praying people, must be public-spirited in prayer, must wrestle with God in prayer, and continue to do so; "*Keep not silence, never grow remiss in the duty, or weary of it.*" Give him no rest—alluding to an importunate beggar, to the widow that with her continual coming wearied the judge into a complaisance. God said to *Moses, Let me alone*; (Exod. xxxii. 10.) and Jacob to Christ, *I will not let thee go except thou bless me*, Gen. xxxii. 26. (3.) God is so far from being displeased with our pressing importunity, as men commonly are, that he invites and encourages it, he bids us to cry after him; he is not like those disciples who discouraged a petitioner, Matt. xv. 23. He bids us make pressing applications at the throne of grace, and *give him no rest*, Luke xi. 5, 6. He suffers himself not only to be reasoned with, but to be wrestled with. (4.) The public welfare and prosperity of God's Jerusalem is that which we should be most importunate for at the throne of grace; we should pray for the good of the church. [1.] That it may be safe, that he would establish it, that the interests of the church may be firm, may be settled for the present, and secured to posterity. [2.] That it may be great, may be a praise in the earth; that it may be praised, and God may be praised for it. When gospel-truths are cleared and vindicated, when gospel-ordinances are duly administered in their purity and power, when the church becomes eminent for holiness and love, then Jerusalem is a praise in the earth, then it is in reputation. (5.) We must persevere in our prayers for mercy to the church, till the mercy comes; we must do as the prophet's servant did, go yet seven times, till the promising cloud appear, 1 Kings xviii. 44. (6.) It is a good sign that God is coming toward a people in ways of mercy, when he pours out a spirit of prayer upon them, and stirs them up to be fervent and constant in their intercessions.

II. *Plenty of all other good things, v. 8.* This follows upon the former; when the people praise God, when *all the people praise him, then shall the earth yield her increase*, (Ps. lxxvii. 5, 6.) and outward prosperity, crowning its piety, shall help to make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Observe, 1. The great distress they had been in, and the losses they had sustained; their corn had been meat for themselves and their families; here was a double grievance, that they themselves wanted that which was necessary to the support of life, and were in danger of perishing for want of it, and that their enemies were strengthened by it, had their camp victualled with it, and so were the better able to do them a mischief. God is said to give their corn to their enemies, because he not only permitted it, but ordered it, to be the just punishment both of their abuse of plenty, and of their symbolizing with strangers, ch. i. 7. The wine which they had laboured for, and which in their affliction they needed, for the relief of those among them that were of a heavy heart, strangers drink it, to gratify their lusts with; this sore judgment was threatened for their sins, Lev. xxvi. 16. Deut. xxviii. 33. See how uncertain our creature-comforts are, and how much it is our wisdom to labour for that meat which we can never be robbed of. 2. The great fulness and satisfaction they should now be restored to; (v. 9.) *They that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the Lord*. See here, (1.) God's mercy in giving plenty, and peace to enjoy it; that the earth yields her increase, that there are hands to be employed in gathering it in, and that they are not taken off by plague and sickness, or otherwise employed in war; that strangers and enemies do not come, and gather it for themselves, or take it from us when we have gathered it, that we eat the labour of our hands, and the bread is not eaten out of our mouths, and especially, that we have opportunity and a heart to honour God with it, and that his courts are open to us, and we are not restrained from attending on him in them. (2.) Our duty in the enjoyment of this mercy; we must gather what God gives, with care and industry, we must eat it freely and cheerfully, not bury the gifts of God's bounty, but make use of them; we must, when we have eaten and are full, *bless the Lord*, and give him thanks for his bounty to us, and we must serve him with our abundance, use it in works of piety and charity, eat it and *drink it in the courts of his holiness*, where the altar, the priest, and the poor, must all have their share. The greatest comfort that a good man has in his meat and drink is that it furnishes him with a meat-offering and a drink-offering for the Lord his God; (Joel ii. 14.) the greatest comfort that he has in an estate is, that it gives him an opportunity of honouring God and doing good. This wine is to be *drunk in the courts of God's holiness*, and therefore moderately and with sobriety, as before the Lord. 3. The solemn ratification of this promise; *The Lord has sworn by his right hand and by the arm of his strength*, that he will do this for his people; God confirms it by an oath, that his people, who trust in him and his word, may have *strong consolation*, Heb. vi. 17, 18. And since he can swear by no greater, he swears by himself; sometimes by his being, *As I live*; (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) sometimes by his holiness; (Ps. lxxxix. 35.) here by his power, his right hand, (which was lifted up in swearing, Deut. xxxii. 40.) and his arm of power; for it is a great satisfaction to those who build their hopes on God's promise, to be sure that *what he has promised he is able to perform*, Rom. iv. 21. To assure us of this, he has sworn by his strength, pawing the reputation of his omnipotence upon it; if he did not do it, let it be said, *It was because he could not*, which the Egyptians shall never say, (Numb. xiv.

16.) nor any other. It is the comfort of God's people, that his power is engaged for them; his right hand, where the Mediator sits.

10. Go through, go through the gates; prepare you the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. 11. Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. 12. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.

This, as many like passages before, refers to the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, and, under the type and figure of that, to the great redemption wrought out by Jesus Christ, and the proclaiming of gospel-grace and liberty through him.

1. Way shall be made for this salvation; all difficulties shall be removed, and whatever might obstruct it shall be taken out of the way, v. 10. The gates of Babylon shall be thrown open, that they may with freedom go through them; the way from Babylon to the land of Israel shall be prepared, causeways shall be made and cast up through wet and miry places, and the stones gathered out from places rough and rocky; in the convenient places appointed for their rendezvous, standards shall be set up for their direction and encouragement, that they may embody for their greater safety. Thus John Baptist was sent to *prepare the way of the Lord*, Matth. iii. 3. And before Christ by his graces and comforts comes to any for salvation, preparation is made for him by repentance, which is called the *preparation of the gospel of peace*; (Eph. vi. 15.) here the way is levelled by it, there the feet are shod with it, which comes all to one, for both are in order to a journey.

2. Notice shall be given of this salvation, v. 11, 12. It shall be proclaimed to the captives, that they are set at liberty, and may go if they please; it shall be proclaimed to their neighbours, to all about them, *to the end of the world*, that God has pleaded Zion's just, injured, and despised cause. Let it be said to Zion, for her comfort, *Behold, thy salvation comes*, thy Saviour, who brings salvation; he will bring such a work, such a reward, in this salvation, as shall be admired by all; a reward of comfort and peace with him; but a work of humiliation and reformation before him, to prepare his people for that recompense of their sufferings; and then, with reference to each, it follows, they shall be called, *The holy people*, and, *The redeemed of the Lord*; the work before him, which shall be wrought in them and upon them, shall denominate them a holy people, cured of their inclination to idolatry, and consecrated to God only; and the reward with him, the deliverance wrought for them, shall denominate the *redeemed of the Lord*, so redeemed as none but God could redeem them; and redeemed to be his, their bonds loosed, that they might be his servants. Jerusalem shall then be called, *Sought out, a city not forsaken*; she had been forsaken for many years, there were neither traders nor worshippers that inquired the way to Jerusalem as formerly, when it was frequented by both; but now God will again make it considerable; it shall be sought out, visited, resorted to, and court made to it, as much as ever. When it is called a *holy city*, then it is called *sought out*, for holiness puts an honour and beauty upon any place or person, which draws

respect, and makes them to be admired, beloved, and inquired after.

But this, being proclaimed to the end of the world, must have a reference to the gospel of Christ, which was to be preached to every creature; and it speaks, (1.) The glory of Christ. It is published immediately to the church, but is thence echoed to every nation; *Behold, thy salvation cometh*. Christ is not only the Saviour, but the Salvation itself; for the happiness of believers is not only from him, but in him, *ch. xii. 2*. His salvation consists both in the work and in the reward which he brings with him; for those that are his shall neither be idle, nor lose their labour. (2.) The beauty of the church. Christians shall be called *saints*, (1 Cor. i. 2.) *the holy people*, for they are chosen and called *to salvation through sanctification*; they shall be called the *redeemed of the Lord*, to him they owe their liberty, and therefore to him they owe their service, and they shall not be ashamed to own both. None are to be called the *redeemed of the Lord*, but those that are the *holy people*; the people of God's purchase is a holy nation. And they shall be called, *Sought out*; God shall seek them out, and find them, wherever they are dispersed, eclipsed, or lost in a crowd; men shall seek them out, that they may join themselves to them, and not forsake them. It is good to associate with the holy people, that we may learn their ways, and with the *redeemed of the Lord*, that we may share in the blessings of the redemption.

## CHAP. LXIII.

In this chapter, we have, I. God coming towards his people in ways of mercy and deliverance, and this is to be joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, where it was said to Zion, *Behold, thy salvation comes*; for here it is showed how it comes, v. 1. . . 6. II. God's people meeting him with their devotions, and addressing themselves to him with suitable affections; and this part of the chapter is carried on to the close of the next. In this, we have, 1. A thankful acknowledgment of the great favours God had bestowed upon them, v. 7. 2. The magnifying of these favours, from the consideration of God's relation to them, (v. 8.) his compassionate concern for them, (v. 9.) their unworthiness, (v. 10.) and the occasion which it gave both him and them to call to mind former mercies, v. 11. . . 14. 3. A very humble and earnest prayer to God to appear for them in their present distress, pleading God's mercy, (v. 15.) their relation to him, (v. 16.) their desire toward him, (v. 17.) and the insolence of their enemies, v. 18, 19. So that, upon the whole, we learn to embrace God's promises with an active faith, and then to improve them, and make use of them, both in prayers and praises.

1. **WHO** is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? *this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.* 2. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? 3. I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people *there was none with me*: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury: and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. 4. For the day of vengeance *is in my heart*, and the year of my redeemed is come. 5. And I looked, and *there was none to help*; and I wondered that *there was none to uphold*; therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury, it upheld me. 6. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and



make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.

It is a glorious victory that is here inquired into first, and then accounted for; 1. It is a victory obtained by the providence of God over the enemies of Israel; over the Babylonians, (say some,) whom Cyrus conquered, and God by him, and they will have the prophet to make the first discovery of him in his triumphant return, when he is in the country of Edom: but this can by no means be admitted, because the country of Babylon is always spoken of as the land of the north, whereas Edom lays south from Jerusalem, so that the conqueror would not return through that country; the victory therefore is obtained over the Edomites themselves, who had triumphed in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, (Ps. cxxxvii. 7.) and cut off those who, making their way as far as they could from the enemy, escaped to the Edomites, (Obad. xii. 13.) and were therefore reckoned with when Babylon was; for, no doubt, that prophecy was accomplished, though we do not meet in history with the accomplishment of it, (Jer. xlix. 13.) *Bozrah shall become a desolation*. Yet this victory over Edom is put as an instance or specimen of the like victories, obtained over other nations that had been enemies to Israel: this over the Edomites is named, for the sake of the old enmity of Esau against Jacob, (Gen. xxvii. 41.) and perhaps with an allusion to David's glorious triumphs over the Edomites, by which it should seem, more than by any other of his victories, he got him a name, Ps. lx. title, 2 Sam. viii. 13, 14. But this is not all; 2. It is a victory obtained by the grace of God in Christ over our spiritual enemies; we find the garments dipped in blood adorning him whose name is called *The Word of God*, Rev. xix. 13. And who that is, we know well; it is he through whom we are more than conquerors over those principalities and powers which on the cross he spoiled and triumphed over.

In this representation of the victory, we have,

1. An admiring question put to the Conqueror, v. 1, 2. It is put by the church, or by the prophet in the name of the church. He sees a mighty Hero returning in triumph from a bloody engagement, and makes bold to ask him two questions; 1. *Who is he?* He observes him to come from the country of Edom, to come in such apparel as was glorious to a soldier, not embroidered or laced, but besmeared with blood and dirt: he observes him to come as one either frightened or fatigued, but that he *travels in the greatness of his strength*, altogether unbroken.

Triumphant and victorious he appears,  
And honour in his looks and habit wears;  
How strong he treads, how stately doth he go!  
Pompous and solemn is his pace,  
And full of majesty, his face:  
Who is this mighty hero—who?

MR. NORRIS.

The question, *Who is this?* perhaps means the same with that which Joshua put to the same Person, when he appeared to him with his sword drawn? (Josh. v. 13.) *Art thou for us or for our adversaries?* Or rather, the same with that which Israel put in a way of adoration, (Exod. xv. 11.) *Who is a God like unto thee?* 2. The other question is, *Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel?* What hard service hast thou been engaged in, that thou carriest with thee these marks of toil and danger? Is it possible that one who has such majesty and terror in his countenance, should be employed in the mean and servile work of *treading the wine-press*? Surely it is not. That which is really the glory of the Redeemer seems *prima facie—at first*, a disparagement to him, as it would be to a mighty prince to do the work of the vine-dressers and husbandmen; for he *took upon him the form of a servant*, and carried with him the marks of servitude.

B. An admirable answer returned by him:

1. He tells who he is; *I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save*. He is the Saviour. God was Israel's Saviour out of the hand of their oppressors; the Lord Jesus is ours; his name, *Jesus*, signifies a Saviour, for he *saves his people from their sins*. In the salvation wrought, he will have us to take notice, (1.) Of the truth of his promise, which is therein performed; *he speaks in righteousness*, and will therefore make good every word that he has spoken, with which he will have us to compare what he does; that, setting the word and the work the one over against the other, what he does may ratify what he has said, and what he has said may justify what he does. (2.) Of the efficacy of his power, which is therein exerted; *he is mighty to save*, able to bring about the promised redemption, whatever difficulties and oppositions may lie in the way of it.

'Tis I who to my promise faithful stand,  
I, who the powers of death, hell, and the grave,  
Have foil'd with this all-conquering hand,  
I, who most ready am, and mighty too, to save.

MR. NORRIS.

2. He tells how he came to appear in this hue; (v. 3.) *I have trodden the wine-press alone*. Being compared to one that treads in the wine-press, such is his condescension, in the midst of his triumphs, that he does not scorn the comparison, but admits it, and carries it on. He does indeed *tread the wine-press*, but it is the *great wine-press of the wrath of God*, (Rev. xiv. 19.) in which we sinners deserved to have been cast; but Christ was pleased to cast our enemies into it, and to *destroy him that had the power of death*, that he might deliver us. And of this, the bloody work which God sometimes made among the enemies of the Jews, and which is here foretold, was a type and figure.

Observe the account the Conqueror gives of his victory.

(1.) He gains the victory purely by his own strength; *I have trodden the wine-press alone*, v. 3. When God delivered his people, and destroyed their enemies, if he made use of instruments, he did not need them; but among his people, for whom the salvation was to be wrought, no assistance offered itself; they were weak, and helpless, and had no ability to do any thing for their own relief; they were desponding and listless, and had no heart to do any thing; they were not disposed to give the least stroke or struggle for liberty; neither the captives themselves, nor any of their friends for them; (v. 5.) *"I looked, and there was none to help"*, as one would have expected, nothing of a bold, active spirit appeared among them; nay, there were not only none to lead, but, which was more strange, *there was none to uphold*, none that would come in as a second, that had the courage to join with Cyrus against their oppressors; *therefore mine arm brought about the salvation; not by created might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, my own arm*. Note, God can help, when all other helpers fail; nay, that is his time to help, and therefore for that very reason he will put forth his own power so much the more gloriously. But this is most fully applicable to Christ's victories over our spiritual enemies, which he obtained by single combat. He trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath alone, and triumphed over principalities and powers in himself, Col. ii. 15. *Of the people there was none with him*; for when he entered the lists with the powers of darkness, *all his disciples forsook him, and fled*. There was *none to help*, none that could, none that durst; and he might well wonder not only that among the children of men, whose concern it was, there was not only *none to uphold*, but that there were so many to oppose and hinder it if they could.

(2.) He undertakes the war purely out of his own

zeal; it is in his anger, it is in his fury, that he treads down his enemies, (v. 3.) and that *fury upholds him*, and carries him on in this enterprize, v. 5. God wrought salvation for the oppressed Jews, entirely because he was very angry with the oppressing Babylonians, angry at their idolatries and sorceries, their pride and cruelty, and the injuries they did to his people; in which, as they increased and grew more insolent and outrageous, his anger increased to fury. Our Lord Jesus wrought out our redemption, in a holy zeal for the honour of his Father, the happiness of mankind, and a holy indignation at the daring attempts Satan had made upon both; this zeal and indignation upheld him throughout his whole undertaking.

Two branches there were of this zeal, that animated him;

[1.] He had a zeal against his and his people's enemies; *The day of vengeance is in my heart*, (v. 4.) the day fixed in the eternal counsels for taking vengeance on them; this was written in his heart, so that he could not forget it, could not let it slip; his heart was full of it, and it lay as a charge, as a weight, upon him, which made him push on this holy war with so much vigour. Note, There is a day fixed for divine vengeance, which may be long deferred, but will come at last; and we may be content to wait for it, for the Redeemer himself does, though his heart is upon it.

[2.] He had a zeal for his people, and for all that he designed to make sharers in the intended salvation; "*The year of my redeemed is come*, the year appointed for their redemption." The year was fixed for the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and God kept time to a day; (Exod. xii. 41.) so there was for their release out of Babylon; (Dan. ix. 2.) so there was for Christ's coming to destroy the works of the devil; so there is for all the deliverances of the church, and the Deliverer has an eye to it. Observe, *First*, With what pleasure he speaks of his people; they are his *redeemed*; they are his own, dear to him. Though their redemption is not yet wrought out, yet he calls them *his redeemed*, because it shall as surely be done as if it were done already. *Secondly*, With what pleasure he speaks of his people's redemption; how glad he is that *the time is come*, though he is likely to meet with a sharp encounter. Now that the year of my redeemed is come, *Lo, I come*; delay shall be no longer. *Now will I arise*, saith the Lord. *Now thou shalt see what I will do to Pharaoh*. Note, The promised salvation must be patiently waited for, till the time appointed comes; yet we must attend the promises with our prayers. Does Christ say, *Surely I come quickly*; let our hearts reply, *Even so, come*; let the year of the redeemed come.

(3.) He will obtain a complete victory over them all.

[1.] Much is already done; for he now appears *red in his apparel*; such abundance of blood is shed, that the Conqueror's garments are all stained with it. This was predicted, long before, by dying Jacob, concerning *Shiloh*, that is, *Christ*, that he should *wash his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes*, which perhaps this alludes to, Gen. xlix. 11.

With ornamental drops bedeck'd I stood,  
And writ my victory with my en'my's blood. Mr. NORRIS.

In the destruction of the antichristian powers we meet with abundance of bloodshed, (Rev. xiv. 20.—xix. 13.) which yet, according to the dialect of prophecy, may be understood spiritually, and doubtless so may this here.

[2.] More shall yet be done; (v. 6.) *I will tread down the people*, that yet stand it out against me, *in mine anger*; for the victorious Redeemer, when the year of the Redeemer is come, will go on conquering

and to conquer, Rev. vi. 2. When he begins, he will also make an end. Observe, How he will complete his victories over the enemies of his church *First*, He will infatuate them; he will make them drunk, so that there shall be neither sense nor steadiness in their counsels; they shall drink of the cup of his fury, and that shall intoxicate them: or, he will make them *drunk with their own blood*, Rev. xvii. 6. Let those that make themselves drunk with the *cup of riot*, (and then they are in their fury,) repent and reform, lest God make them drunk with the *cup of trembling*, the cup of his fury. *Secondly*, He will enfeeble them; he will *bring down their strength*, and so bring them down to the earth; for what strength can hold out against Omnipotence?

7. I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses.

8. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. 9. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them: and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. 10. But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them. 11. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his holy Spirit within him? 12. That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? 13. That led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? 14. As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD caused him to rest; so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.

The prophet is here, in the name of the church, taking a review, and making a thankful recognition, of God's dealings with his church all along, ever since he founded it, before he comes, in the latter end of this chapter, and in the next, as a watchman upon the walls, earnestly to pray to God for his compassion toward her in her present deplorable state; and it was usual for God's people, in their prayers, thus to look back.

1. Here is a general acknowledgment of God's goodness to them all along, v. 7. It was said, in general, of God's prophets and people, (*ch.* lxii. 6.) that they *make mention of the Lord*; now here we are told what it is in God, that they do especially delight to make mention of, and that is, his goodness, which the prophet here so makes mention of, as if he thought he could never say enough of it. He mentions the *kindness of God*, (which never appeared so evident, so eminent, as in his love to mankind in *sending his Son* to save us, Tit. iii. 4.) his loving-kindness, kindness that shows itself

every thing that is endearing; nay, so plenteous are the springs, and so various the streams, of divine mercy, that he speaks of it in the plural number, *his loving-kindnesses*; for if we would count the fruits of his loving-kindness, they are *more in number than the sand*. With his loving-kindnesses he mentions his *praises*; the thankful acknowledgments which the saints make of his loving-kindness, and the angels too. It must be mentioned, to God's honour, what a tribute of praise is paid him by all his creatures in consideration of his loving-kindness. See how copiously he speaks, 1. Of the goodness that is from God, the gifts of his loving-kindness; *all that the Lord has bestowed on us in particular, relating to life and godliness, in our personal and family capacity*; let every man speak for himself, speak as he has found, and he must own that he has had a great deal bestowed upon him by the divine bounty. But we must also mention the favours bestowed upon his church, his *great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he has bestowed on them*. Note, We must bless God for the mercies enjoyed by others, as well as for those enjoyed by ourselves, and reckon that bestowed on ourselves, which is *bestowed on the house of Israel*. 2. Of the goodness that is in God. God does good because he is good; what he bestows upon us, must be run up to the original, it is *according to his mercies*, not according to our merits, and *according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses*, which can never be spent. Thus we should magnify God's goodness, and speak honourably of it, not only when we plead it, (as David, Ps. li. 1.) but when we praise it.

II. Here is particular notice taken of the steps of God's mercy to Israel, ever since it was formed into a nation.

1. The expectations God had concerning them, that they would conduct themselves well, *v. 8*. When he brought them out of Egypt and took them into covenant with himself, he said, "*Surely they are my people, I take them as such, and am willing to hope they will approve themselves so; children that will not lie*;" that will not *dissemble with God* in their covenantings with him, nor treacherously depart from him by breaking their covenant, and starting aside like a broken bow. They said, more than once, *All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do, and will be obedient*; and thereupon he took them to be his peculiar people, saying, *Surely they will not lie*. God deals fairly and faithfully with them, and therefore expects they should deal so with him. They are *children of the covenant*, (Acts iii. 25.) children of those that clave unto the Lord, and therefore it may be hoped that they will tread in the steps of their father's constancy. Note, God's people are *children that will not lie*; for those that will, are not his children, but the devil's.

2. The favour he showed them, with an eye to these expectations; *So he was their Saviour* out of the bondage of Egypt, and all the calamities of their wilderness-state, and many a time since he had been their Saviour.

See particularly, (*v. 9*.) what he did for them as their Saviour.

(1.) The principle that moved him to work salvation for them; it was *in his love, and in his pity*, out of mere compassion to them, and a tender affection for them, not because he either needed them, or could be benefited by them. This is strangely expressed here, *In all their affliction he was afflicted*; not that the Eternal Mind is capable of grieving, or God's infinite blessedness of suffering the least damage or diminution; (God cannot be afflicted;) but thus he is pleased to show forth the love and concern he has for his people in their affliction; thus far he sympathizes with them, that he takes what injury is done to them as done to himself, and will

reckon for it accordingly. Their cries move him, (Exod. iii. 7.) and he appears for them as vigorously as if he were pained in their pain; *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* This is a matter of great comfort to God's people in their affliction, that God is so far from *afflicting willingly*, (Lam. iii. 33.) that, if they humble themselves under his hand, he is *afflicted in their affliction*, as the tender parents are in the severe operations which the case of a sick child calls for. There is another reading of these words in the original; *In all their affliction there was no affliction*; though they were in great affliction, yet the property of it was so altered by the grace of God sanctifying it to them for their good, the rigour of it was so mitigated, and it was so allayed and balanced with mercies, they were so wonderfully supported and comforted under it, and it proved so short, and ended so well, that it was in effect no affliction. The troubles of the saints are not that to them that they are to others, they are not afflictions, but medicines; saints are enabled to call them *light, and but for a moment*, and, with an eye to heaven as all in all, to make nothing of them.

(2.) The Person employed in their salvation; *the angel of his face, or presence*. Some understand it of a created angel; the highest angel in heaven, even the angel of his presence, that attends next the throne of his glory, is not thought too great, too good, to be sent on this errand. Thus the little ones' angels are said to be those that *always behold the face of our Father*, Matth. xviii. 10. But this is rather to be understood of Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, that Angel of whom God spake to Moses, (Exod. xxiii. 20.) whose *voice Israel was to obey*. He is called *Jehovah*, Exod. xiii. 21.—xiv. 21, 24. He is the Angel of the covenant, God's Messenger to the world, Mal. iii. 1. He is the *Angel of God's face*, for he is the *express Image of his person*; and the glory of God shines in the face of Christ. He that was to work out the eternal salvation, as an earnest of that, wrought out the temporal salvations that were typical of it.

(3.) The progress and perseverance of this favour. He not only redeemed them out of their bondage, but *he bare them, and carried them, all the days of old*; they were weak, but he supported them by his power, sustained them by his bounty; when they were burdened, and ready to sink, he bore them up, in the wars they made upon the nations, he stood by them, and bore them out; though they were peevish, he bore with them, and suffered their manners, Acts xiii. 18. He carried them, as the nursing father does the child, though they would have tired any arms but his; he carried them as the eagle her young upon her wings, Deut. xxxii. 11. And it was a long time that he was *troubled with them*, (if we may so speak,) it was *all the days of old*; his care of them was not at an end, even when they were grown up, and settled in Canaan. All this was *in his love and pity, ex mero motu—of his mere good-will*; he loved them because he would love them, as he says, Deut. vii. 7, 8.

3. Their disingenuous conduct toward him, and the trouble they thereby brought upon themselves; (*v. 10*.) *But they rebelled*. Things looked very hopeful and promising; one would have thought that they should have continued dutiful children to God, and then there was no doubt but he would have continued a gracious Father to them; but here is a sad change on both sides, and *on them be the breach*. (1.) *They revolted from their allegiance* to God, and *took up arms* against him; they *rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit* with their unbelief and murmuring, beside the iniquity of the golden calf; and this had been their way and manner ever since. Though he was ready to say of them, *They will no lie*, though he had done so much for them, borne

them and carried them, yet they thus ill requited him, like *foolish people and unwise*, Deut. xxxii. 6. This grieved him, Ps. xcv. 10. The ungrateful rebellions of God's children against him are a vexation to his Holy Spirit. (2.) Thereupon he justly withdrew his protection, and not only so, but made war upon them, as a prince justly does upon the rebels. He who had been so much their Friend, was turned to be their Enemy, and fought against them, by one judgment after another, both in the wilderness, and after their settlement in Canaan. See the malignity and mischievousness of sin; it makes God an Enemy, even to those for whom he has done the part of a good friend, and makes him angry, who was 'all love and pity. See the folly of sinners; they wilfully leave him for a Friend, who is the most desirable Friend, and make him their Enemy, who is the most formidable Enemy. This refers especially to those calamities that were of late brought upon them by their captivity in Babylon, for their idolatries, and other sins. That which is both the original, and the great aggravation of their troubles, was, that God was turned to be their Enemy.

4. A particular reflection made, on this occasion, upon what God did for them, when he first formed them into a people; *Then he remembered the days of old*, v. 11. This may be understood either, (1.) Of the people. Israel then (spoken of as a single person) remembered the days of old, looked into their Bibles, read the story of God's bringing their fathers out of Egypt, considered it more closely than ever they did before, and reasoned upon it, as Gideon did; (Judg. vi. 13.) "*Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of? Where is he that brought them up out of Egypt? Is he not as able to bring us up out of Babylon? Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Where is the Lord God of our fathers?*" This they consider as an inducement and an encouragement to them to repent, and return to him: their fathers were a provoking people, and yet found him a pardoning God; and why may not they find him so, if they return to him? They also use it as a plea with God in prayer for the turning again of their captivity, like that *ch. li. 9, 10*. Note, When the present days are dark and cloudy, it is good to remember the days of old, to recollect our own and others' experiences of the divine power and goodness, and make use of them; to look back upon the years of the right hand of the Most High, (Ps. lxxvii. 5, 10.) and remember that he is God, and changes not. Or, (2.) We may understand it of God; he put himself in mind of the days of old, of his covenant with Abraham; (Lev. xxvi. 42.) he said, *Where is he that brought Israel up out of the sea?* Stirring up himself to come and save them, with this consideration, "Why should not I appear for them now as I did for their fathers, who were as undeserving, as ill-deserving, as they are?" See how far off divine mercy will go, how far back it will look, to find out a reason for doing good to his people, when no present considerations appear but what make against them. Nay, it makes that a reason for relieving them, which might have been used as a reason for abandoning them. He might have said, "I have delivered them formerly, but they have again brought trouble upon themselves, (Prov. xix. 19.) therefore I will deliver them no more." Judg. x. 13. But no; mercy rejoices against judgment, and turns the argument the other way; "I have formerly delivered them, and therefore will now."

Which way soever we take it, whether the people plead it with God, or God with himself, let us view the particulars; they agree very much with the confession and prayer which the children of the captivity made upon a solemn fast-day, (Neh. ix. 5,

&c.) which may serve as a comment on these verses here, which call to mind Moses and his people; that is, what God did by Moses for his people, especially in bringing them through the Red sea; for that is it that is here most insisted on; for it was a work which he much gloried in, and which his people therefore may in a particular manner encourage themselves with the remembrance of.

[1.] God led them by the right hand of Moses, (v. 12.) and the wonder-working rod in his hand; (Ps. lxxvii. 20.) *Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses*. It was not Moses that led them, any more than it was Moses that fed them, (John vi. 32.) but God by Moses; for it was he that qualified Moses for, called him to, assisted and prespered him in, that great undertaking. Moses is here called the shepherd of his flock; God was the Owner of the flock, and the chief Shepherd of Israel; (Ps. lxxx. 1.) but Moses was a shepherd under him; and he was inured to labour and patience, and so fitted for this pastoral care, by his being trained up to keep the flock of his father Jethro. Herein he was a type of Christ the good Shepherd, that lays down his life for the sheep; which was more than Moses did for Israel, though he did a great deal for them.

[2.] He put his holy Spirit within him; the Spirit of God was among them, and not only his providence, but his grace, did work for them; (Neh. ix. 20.) *Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them*. The Spirit of wisdom and courage, as well as the Spirit of prophecy, was put into Moses, to qualify him for that service among them, to which he was called; and some of his spirit was put upon the seventy elders, Numb. xi. 17. This was a great blessing to Israel, that they had among them not only inspired writings, but inspired men.

[3.] He carried them safely through the Red sea, and thereby saved them out of the hands of Pharaoh. First, He divided the water before them, (v. 12.) so that it gave them not only passage, but protection, not only opened them a lane, but erected them a wall on either side. Secondly, He led them through the deep as a horse in the wilderness, or in the plain; (v. 13.) they and their wives and children, with all their baggage, went as easily and readily through the bottom of the sea, though we may suppose it muddy or stony, or both, as a horse goes along upon even ground; so that they did not stumble, though it was an untrodden path, which neither they nor any one else ever went before. If God make us a way, he will make it plain and level; the road he opens to his people he will lead them in. Thirdly, To complete the mercy, he brought them up out of the sea, v. 11. Though the ascent, it is likely, was very steep, dirty, slippery, and unconquerable, (at least by the women and children, and the men, considering how they were loaded, (Exod. xii. 34.) and how fatigued,) yet God by his power brought them up from the depths of the earth; and it was a kind of resurrection to them; it was as *life from the dead*.

[4.] He brought them safe to a place of rest; as a beast goes down into the valley, carefully and gradually, so the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest. Many a time in their march through the wilderness they had resting-places provided for them, by the direction of the Spirit of the Lord in Moses, v. 11. And at length they were made to rest finally in Canaan, and the Spirit of the Lord gave them that rest according to the promise. It is by the Spirit of the Lord that God's Israel are caused to return to God, and repose in him as their Rest.

[5.] All this he did for them by his own power, for his own praise. First, It was by his own power, as the God of nature, that has all the powers of nature at his command; he did it with his glorious arm; the arm of his gallantry, or bravery; so the

word signifies. It was not Moses's rod, but God's glorious arm, that did it. *Secondly*, It was for his own praise; to make himself an everlasting name, (v. 12.) a glorious name, (v. 14.) that he might be glorified, everlastingly glorified, upon this account. This is that which God is doing in the world with his glorious arm, he is making to himself a glorious name, and it shall last to endless ages, when the most celebrated names of the great ones of the earth shall be written in the dust.

15. Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained? 16. Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting. 17. O LORD, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance. 18. The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. 19. We are thine: thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name.

The foregoing praises were intended as an introduction to this prayer, which is continued to the end of the next chapter, and it is an affectionate, importunate, pleading prayer. It is calculated for the time of the captivity. As they had promises, so they had prayers, prepared for them against that time of need; that they might take with them words in turning to the Lord, and say unto him what he himself taught them to say, in which they might the better hope to prevail, the words being of God's own enditing. Some good interpreters think this prayer looks further, and that it speaks the complaints of the Jews under their last and final rejection from God, and destruction by the Romans; for there is one passage in it, (ch. lxiv. 4.) which is applied to the grace of the gospel by the apostle, (1 Cor. ii. 9.) that grace for the rejecting of which they were rejected. In these verses, we may observe,

I. The petitions they put up to God. 1. That he would take cognizance of their case, and of the desires of their souls toward him; *Look down from heaven, and behold*. They know very well that God sees all, but they pray that he would regard them, would condescend to favour them, would look upon them with an eye of compassion and concern, as he looked upon the affliction of his people in Egypt, when he was about to appear for their deliverance. In begging that he would only look down upon them and behold them, they do in effect appeal to his justice against their enemies, and pray judgment against them, as Jehoshaphat; (2 Chron. xx. 11, 12.) *Behold, how they reward us. Wilt thou not judge them?* And they refer themselves to his mercy and wisdom, as to the way in which he will relieve them; (Ps. xxv. 18.) *Look upon mine affliction and my pain. Look down from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory*. God's holiness is his glory. Heaven is his habitation, the throne of his glory, where he most manifests his glory, and whence he is said to look down upon this earth, Ps. xxxiii. 14. His holiness is in a special manner celebrated there by the blessed angels; (ch. vi. 3. Rev. iv. 8.) there his holy ones

attend him, and are continually about him; so that it is the habitation of his holiness, which is an encouragement to all his praying people, (who desire to be holy as he is holy,) that he dwells in a holy place. 2. That he would take a course for their relief; (v. 17.) *"Return; change thy way towards us, and proceed not in thy controversy with us: return in mercy, and let us have not only a gracious look toward us, but thy gracious presence with us."* God's people dread nothing more than his departures from them, and desire nothing more than his returns to them.

II. The complaints they made to God. Two things they complain of; 1. That they were given up to themselves, and God's grace did not recover them, v. 17. It is a strange expostulation, *"Why hast thou made us to err from thy ways; many among us, the generality of us; and this complaint we have all of us some cause to make, that thou hast hardened our heart from thy fear."* Some make it to be the language of those among them, that were impious and profane; when the prophets reproved them for the error of their ways, their hardness of heart, and contempt of God's word and commandments, they with a daring impudence charge their sin upon God, and make him the Author of it; and *why doth he then find fault?* Note, Those are wicked indeed, that lay the blame of their wickedness upon God. But I rather take it to be the language of those among them, that lamented the unbelief and impotence of their people, not accusing God of being the Author of them, but complaining of them to him. They own that they had erred from God's ways, that their hearts had been hardened from his fear, that they had not received the impressions which the fear of God ought to make upon them; and this was the cause of all their errors from his ways; or, from his fear; from the true worship of God; and that is a hard heart in deed, which is alienated from the service of a God so incontestably great and good. Now this they complained of as their great misery and burthen, that God had for their sins left them to this; had permitted them to err from his ways, and had justly withheld his grace, so that their hearts were hardened from his fear. When they ask, *Why hast thou done this?* it is not as charging him with wrong, but lamenting it as a sore judgment. God had made them to err, and hardened their hearts, not only by withdrawing his Spirit from them, because they had grieved, and vexed, and quenched him, (v. 10.) but by a judicial sentence upon them, (Go, make the heart of this people fat, ch. vi. 9, 10.) and by his providences concerning them, which had proved sad occasions of their departure from him. David complains of his banishment, that in it he was in effect bidden to go serve other gods, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. Their troubles had alienated many of them from God, and prejudiced them against his service; and because the rod of the wicked had lain long on their lot, they were ready to put forth their hand unto iniquity, (Ps. cxxv. 3.) and this was the thing they complained most of; their afflictions were their temptations, and to many of them invincible ones. Note, Convinced consciences complain most of spiritual judgments, and dread that most in affliction, which draws them from God and duty.

2. That they were given up to their enemies, and God's providence did not rescue and relieve them; (v. 18.) *Our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary*. As it was a grief to them, that in their captivity the generality of them had lost their affections to God's worship, and had their hearts hardened from it by their affliction; so it was a further grief, that they were deprived of their opportunities of worshipping God in solemn assemblies. They complained not so much of their adversaries

treading down their *houses and cities*, as of their treading down *God's sanctuary*; because thereby God was immediately affronted, and they were robbed of the comforts they valued most, and took most pleasure in.

III. The pleas they urge with God for mercy and deliverance:

1. They plead the tender compassion God used to show to his people, and his ability and readiness to appear for them, *v. 15.* The most prevailing arguments in prayer are those that are taken from *God himself*; such these are; *Where is thy zeal and thy strength?* God has a zeal for his own glory, and for the comfort of his people; his name is *Jealous*, and he is a jealous God; and he has strength proportionable, to secure his own glory, and the interests of his people, in despite of all opposition. Now where are these? Have they not formerly appeared? Why do they not appear now? It cannot be, that divine zeal, which is infinitely wise and just, should be cooled; that divine strength, which is infinite, should be weakened. Nay, his people had experienced not only *his zeal and his strength, but the sounding of his bowels*, the yearning of them, such a degree of compassion to them as in men causes a commotion and toss within them, as Hos. xi. 8. *My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together*; and Jer. xxxi. 20. *My bowels are troubled, or sound, for him.* Thus God is affected toward his people, thus he expresses a *multitude of mercies toward them*; but where are they now? *Are they restrained?* Ps. lxxvii. 9. Has God, who so often remembered to be gracious, now forgotten it? *Has he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* It can never be. Note, We may ground good expectations of further mercy upon our experiences of former mercy.

2. They plead God's relation to them as their Father; (*v. 16.*) "Thy tender mercies are not restrained, for they are the tender mercies of a father, who, though he may be for a time displeased with his child, will yet, through the force of natural affection, soon be reconciled. *Doubtless thou art our Father*, and therefore thy bowels will yearn toward us." Such good thoughts of God as these we should always keep up in our hearts. *However it be, yet God is good*; for he is our Father. (1.) They own themselves fatherless, if he be not their Father, and so cast themselves upon him with whom *the fatherless findeth mercy*, Hos. xiv. 3. It was the honour of their nation, that they had *Abraham to their father*, (Matth. iii. 9.) who was the friend of God, and Israel, who was a prince with God; but what the better were they for that, unless they had God himself for their Father? "Abraham and Israel cannot help us; they have not the power that God has, they are dead long since, and are *ignorant of us, and acknowledge us not*, they know not what our case is, nor what our wants are, and therefore know not which way to do us a kindness. If Abraham and Israel were alive with us, they would intercede for us, and advise us; but they are gone to the other world, and we know not that they have any communication at all with this world, and therefore they are not capable of doing us any kindness, any further than that we have the honour of being called their children." When the father is dead, *his sons come to honour, and he knows it not*; (Joh. xiv. 21.) but thou, O Lord, art our Father still. The fathers of our flesh may call themselves *ever-loving*, but they are not *ever-living*; it is God only that is the immortal Father, that always knows us, and is never at a distance from us. "Our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name, the name by which we will know and own thee; it is the name by which from of old thou hast been known; thy people have always looked upon thee as the God to whom they

might appeal to right them, and plead their cause. Nay," (according to the sense some give of this place,) "though Abraham and Israel not only cannot, but would not help us, thou wilt; they have not the pity thou hast. We are so degenerate, and corrupt, that Abraham and Israel would not own us for their children, yet we fly to thee as our Father. Abraham cast out his son Ishmael; Jacob disinherited his son Reuben, and cursed Simeon and Levi; but our heavenly Father, in pardoning sin, is *God, and not man*," Hos. xi. 9.

3. They plead God's interest in them, that he was their Lord, their Owner and Proprietor; "We are thy servants; what service we can do, thou art entitled to, and therefore we ought not to serve strange kings and strange gods; *return for thy servants' sake.*" As a father finds himself obliged by natural affection to relieve and protect his child, so a master thinks himself obliged in honour to rescue and protect his servant; "We are *thine* by the strongest engagements, as well as the highest endearments. *Thou hast borne rule over us*, therefore, Lord, assert thine own interest, maintain thine own right; for we are called by *thy name*, and therefore, whither shall we go but to thee, to be righted and protected? *We are thine, save us*; (Ps. cxix. 94.) thine own, own us. We are the *tribes of thine inheritance*, not only thy servants, but thy tenants; we are thine, not only to do work for thee, but to pay rent to thee. The tribes of Israel are God's inheritance, whence issue the little praise and worship that he receives from this lower world; and wilt thou suffer thine own servants and tenants to be thus abused?"

4. They plead that they had but a short enjoyment of the land of promise and the privileges of the sanctuary; (*v. 18.*) *The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while.* From Abraham to David were but fourteen generations, and from David to the captivity but fourteen more; (Matth. i. 17.) and that was but a little while in comparison with what might have been expected from the promise of the *land of Canaan for an everlasting possession*, (Gen. xvii. 8.) and from the power that was put forth to bring them into that land, and settle them in it; "Though we are the *people of thy holiness*, distinguished from other people, and consecrated to thee, yet we are soon dislodged." But this they might thank themselves for; they were, in profession, the *people of God's holiness*, but it was their wickedness that turned them out of the possession of that land.

5. They plead that those who had, and kept, possession of their land, were such as were strangers to God, such as he had no service or honour from; "Thou never barest rule over them, nor did they ever yield thee any obedience; they were not called by thy name, but professed relation to other gods, and were the worshippers of them. Will God suffer those that stand in no relation to him to trample upon those that do? Some give another reading of this; "We are become as those whom thou didst never bear rule over, nor were called by thy name; we are rejected and abandoned, despised and trampled upon, as if we never had been in thy service, nor had thy name called upon us." Thus the shield of Saul was vilely cast away, as though he had not been anointed with oil. But the covenant, that seems to be forgotten, shall be remembered again.

## CHAP. LXIV.

This chapter goes on with that pathetic pleading prayer, which the church offered up to God in the latter part of the foregoing chapter. They had argued from their covenant relation to God and his interest and concern in them; now here, I. They pray that God would appear in some remarkable and surprising manner for them against his and their enemies, *v. 1, 2.* II. They plead what God had formerly done, and was always ready to



do, for his people, v. 3-5. III. They confess themselves to be sinful, and unworthy of God's favour, and that they had deserved the judgments they were now under, v. 6, 7. IV. They refer themselves to the mercy of God as a Father, and submit themselves to his sovereignty, v. 8. V. They represent the very deplorable condition they were in, and earnestly pray for the pardon of sin, and the turning away of God's anger, v. 9-12. And this was not only intended for the use of the captive Jews, but may serve for direction to the church in other times of distress, what to ask of God, and how to plead with him. Are God's people at any time in affliction, in great affliction? Let them pray, let them thus pray.

1. **O**H that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence; 2. *As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil; to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!* 3. When thou didst terrible things *which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.* 4. For since the beginning of the world *men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.* 5. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness; *those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.*

Here,

I. The petition is, that God would appear wonderfully for them now, v. 1, 2. Their case was represented, in the close of the foregoing chapter, as very sad, and very hard, and in this case it was time to cry, "Help, Lord; O that God would manifest his zeal and his strength!" They had prayed, (*ch. lxiii. 15.*) that God would *look down from heaven*; here they pray that he would come down to deliver them, as he had said, *Exod. iii. 8.*

1. They desire that God would in his providence manifest himself both to them and for them. When God works some extraordinary deliverance for his people, he is said to *shine forth*, to show himself strong; so, here, they pray that he would *rend the heavens, and come down*; as when he delivered David, he is said to *bow the heavens, and come down*, (*Ps. xviii. 9.*) to display his power, and justice, and goodness, in an extraordinary manner, so that all may take notice of them, and acknowledge them. God's people desire and pray, that, they themselves having the satisfaction of seeing him, though his way be in the sea, others may be made to see him when his way is in the clouds. This is applicable to the second coming of Christ, when *the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.*

2. They desire that he would vanquish all opposition, and that it might be made to give way before him; that the *mountains might flow down at thy presence*, that the fire of thy wrath may burn so hot against thine enemies, as even to dissolve the rockiest mountains, and melt them down before it, as metal in the furnace, which is made liquid, and cast into what shape the operator pleases; so *the melting fire burns, v. 2.* Let things be put into a ferment, in order to a glorious revolution in favour of the church, *as the fire causes the waters to boil.*

There is an allusion here, some think, to the *volca-*

*noes*, or burning mountains, which sometimes send forth such sulphureous streams as make the adjacent rivers and seas to boil, which, perhaps, are left as sensible intimations of the power of God's wrath, and warning-pieces of the final conflagration.

3. They desire that this may tend very much to the glory and honour of God; *may make his name known*, not only to his friends, (they knew it before, and trusted in his power,) but to his adversaries likewise, that they may know it, and *tremble at his presence*, and may say, with the men of Bethshe-mesh, *Who is able to stand before this Holy Lord God? Who knows the power of his anger?* Note, Sooner or later, God will make his name known to his adversaries, and force those to *tremble at his presence*, that would not come and worship in his presence. God's name, if it be not a strong hold for us, into which we may run and be safe, will be a strong hold against us, out of the reach of which we cannot run and be safe. The day is come, when nations shall be made to tremble at the presence of God, though they were ever so numerous and strong.

II. The plea is, that God had appeared wonderfully for his people formerly; and *Thou hast, therefore Thou wilt*, is good arguing at the throne of grace, *Ps. x. 17.*

1. They plead what he had done for his people Israel in particular, when he brought them out of Egypt, v. 3. He then did terrible things in the plagues of Egypt, *which they looked not for*; they despaired of deliverance, so far were they from any thought of being delivered with such a high hand and outstretched arm. Then he came down upon mount Sinai in such terror, as made that and the adjacent mountains to *flow down at his presence, to skip like rams*, (*Ps. cxiv. 4.*) to tremble, so that they were scattered, and the perpetual hills were made to bow, *Hab. iii. 6.* In the many great salvations God wrought for that people, he did *terrible things which they looked not for*, made great men, that seemed as stately and strong as mountains, to fall before him, and great opposition to give way. See *Judg. v. 4, 5. Ps. lxxvii. 7, 8.* Some refer this to the defeat of Sennacherib's powerful army, which was as surprising an instance of the divine power as the melting down of rocks and mountains would be.

2. They plead what God had been used to do, and had declared his gracious purpose to do, for his people in general. The provision he has made for the safety and happiness of his people, even of all those that seek him, and serve him, and trust in him, is very rich and very ready, so that they need not fear being either disappointed of it, for it is sure, or disappointed in it, for it is sufficient.

(1.) It is *very rich, v. 4.* Men have not heard nor seen what God has prepared for those that wait for him. Observe the character of God's people; they are such as wait for him in the way of duty, wait for the salvation he has promised and designed for them. Observe where the happiness of this people is bound up; it is *what God has prepared for them*, what he has designed for them in his counsel, and is in his providence and grace preparing for them, and preparing them for; what he has *done or will do*; so it may be read. Some of the Jewish doctors have understood this of the blessings reserved for the days of the Messiah, and to them the apostle applies these words; and others extend them to the glories of the world to come. It is all that goodness which God has *laid up for them that fear him, and wrought for them that trust in him, Ps. xxxi. 19.* Of this it is here said, that *since the beginning of the world*, in the most prying and inquisitive ages of it, men have not, either by hearing or seeing, the two learning senses, come to the full knowledge of it. None have seen, or heard, or can

understand, but God himself, what the provision is, that is made for the present and future felicity of holy souls. For, [1.] Much of it was concealed in former ages; they knew it not, because the *unsearchable riches of Christ were hid in God*, were *hid from the wise and prudent*; but in latter ages they were revealed by the gospel; so the apostle applies this, (1 Cor. ii. 9.) for it follows, (v. 10.) *But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit*; compare Rom. xvi. 25, 26. with Eph. iii. 9. That which men had not heard *since the beginning of the world*, they should hear before the end of it, and at the end of it should see, when the veil shall be rent to introduce the glory that is yet to be revealed. God himself knew what he had in store for believers, but none knew beside him. [2.] It cannot be fully comprehended by human understanding, no, not when it is revealed; it is spiritual, and refined from those ideas which our minds are most apt to receive in this world of sense; it is very great, and will far outdo the utmost of our expectations. Even the present peace of believers, much more their future bliss, is such as passes all conception and expression, Phil. iv. 7. None can comprehend it but God himself, whose understanding is infinite. Some give another reading of these words, referring their transcendency not so much to the work itself as to the Author of it; *Neither has the eye seen a god beside thee which doth so*, (or has done, or can do so,) *for him that waits for him*. We must infer from God's works of wondrous grace, as well as from his works of wondrous power, from the kind things, as well as from the great things, he does, that there is *no god like unto him*, nor any among the sons of the mighty to be compared with him.

(2.) It is *very ready*; (v. 5.) "*Thou meetest him that rejoices, and works righteousness*; meetest him with that good which thou hast *prepared* for him, (v. 4.) and dost not forget those that *remember thee in thy ways*." See here what communion there is between a gracious God and a gracious soul: [1.] What God expects from us, in order to our having communion with him. *First*, We must make conscience of doing our duty in every thing, we must work righteousness, must do that which is good, and which the Lord our God requires of us, and must do it well. *Secondly*, We must be cheerful in doing our duty; we must *rejoice and work righteousness*, must delight ourselves in God and in his law, must be pleasant in his service, and sing at our work. God loves a cheerful giver, a cheerful worshipper; we must *serve the Lord with gladness*. *Thirdly*, We must conform ourselves to all the methods of his providence concerning us, and be suitably affected with them: must remember him in his ways, in all the ways wherein he walks, whether he walks towards us, or walks contrary to us; we must mind him, and make mention of him, with thanksgiving, when his ways are ways of mercy, for *in a day of prosperity we must be joyful*, with patience and submission when he contends with us; *In the way of thy judgments we have waited for thee*; and in a day of adversity we must consider. [2.] We are here told what we must expect from God, if we thus attend him in the way of duty; *Thou meetest him*. This speaks the friendship, fellowship, and familiarity, to which God admits them; he meets them to converse with them, to manifest himself to them, and to receive their addresses, Exod. xx. 24.—xxix. 43. It denotes likewise his freeness and forwardness in doing them good; he will *prevent them with the blessings of his goodness*, will *rejoice to do good* to them that *rejoice in working righteousness*, and wait to be gracious to those that wait for him. He meets his penitent people with a pardon, as the father of the prodigal met his returning son, Luke xv. 20. He meets his praying

people with an answer of peace, while they are yet speaking, *ch. lxxv. 24*.

3. They plead the unchangeableness of God's favour, and the stability of his promise, notwithstanding the sins of his people, and his displeasure against them for their sins; "*Behold, thou hast many a time been wroth with us, because we have sinned, and we have been under the tokens of thy wrath; but in those, those ways of thine, the ways of mercy in which we have remembered thee, in those is continuance*;" or, "*in those thou art ever*," (his mercy endures for ever,) "and therefore we shall at last be saved, though thou art wroth, and we have sinned." This agrees with the tenor of God's covenant, that if we *forsake the law*, he will *chasten our transgression with a rod*, but his *loving-kindness he will not utterly take away, his covenant he will not break*, (Ps. lxxxix. 30, &c.) and by this his people have been many a time saved from ruin, when they were just upon the brink of it; see Ps. lxxviii. 38. And by this continuance of the covenant we hope to be saved, for its being an everlasting covenant is all our salvation. Though God has been angry with us for our sins, and justly, yet his anger has endured but for a moment, and has been soon over; but *in his favour is life*, because *in it is continuance*; in the ways of his favour he proceeds and perseveres, and on that we depend for our salvation; see *ch. liv. 7, 8*. It is well for us, that our hopes of salvation are built not upon any merit or sufficiency of our own, (for in that there is no certainty, even Adam in innocence did not abide,) but upon God's mercies and promises, for in those, we are sure, is *continuance*.

6. But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. 7. And *there is none that calleth upon thy name*, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. [8. But now, O LORD, thou art our Father: we are the clay, and thou our Potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.] 9. Be not wroth very sore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. 10. Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. 11. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burnt up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste. 12. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these *things*, O LORD? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?

As we have the Lamentations of Jeremiah, so here we have the Lamentations of Isaiah; the subject of both is the same—the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and the sin of Israel that brought that destruction; only with this difference, Isaiah sees it at a distance, and laments it by the Spirit of prophecy, Jeremiah saw it accomplished. In these verses,

1. The people of God in their affliction confess and bewail their sins, thereby justifying God in their afflictions, owning themselves unworthy of his mercy, and thereby both improving their troubles, and preparing for deliverance. Now that they were under divine rebukes for sin, they had nothing to trust to but the mere mercy of God and the continuance

of that, for among themselves there is none to help, none to uphold, none to stand in the gap and make intercession, for they are all polluted with sin, and therefore unworthy to intercede, all careless and remiss in duty, and therefore unable and unfit to do it.

1. There was a general corruption of manners among them; (v. 6.) *We are all as an unclean thing, or, as an unclean person, as one overspread with a leprosy, who was to be shut out of the camp.* The body of the people were like one under a ceremonial pollution, who was not admitted into the courts of the tabernacle; or, like one labouring under some loathsome disease, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, *nothing but wounds and bruises, ch. i. 6.* We are all by sin become not only obnoxious to God's justice, but odious to his holiness; for sin is that *abominable thing which the Lord hates, and cannot endure to look upon. Even all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;* (1.) The best of our persons are so; we are all so corrupt and polluted, that even those among us who pass for righteous men, in comparison with what our fathers were, *who rejoiced and wrought righteousness, (v. 5.)* are but as filthy rags, fit to be cast to the dung-hill; *The best of them is as a brier.* (2.) The best of our performances are so; there is not only a general corruption of manners, but in devotion too; those which pass for the *sacrifices of righteousness*, when they come to be inquired into, *are the torn, and the lame, and the sick,* and therefore are provoking to God, as nauseous as filthy rags. Our performances, though they be ever so plausible, if we depend upon them as our righteousness, and think to merit by them at God's hands, they are as filthy rags; rags, and will not cover us; filthy rags, and will but defile us. True penitents cast away their idols as filthy rags, (ch. xxx. 22.) odious in their sight; here they acknowledge even their righteousness to be so in God's sight, if he should deal with them in strict justice. Our best duties are so defective, and so far short of the rule, that they are as rags, and so full of sin and corruption cleaving to them, that they are as filthy rags. When we would do good, evil is present with us; and the iniquity of our holy things would be our ruin, if we were under the law.

2. There was a general coldness of devotion among them, v. 7. The measure was filled by the abounding iniquity of the people, and nothing was done to empty it. (1.) Prayer was in a manner neglected; *"There is none that calls on thy name, none that seeks to thee for grace to reform us, and take away sin, or for mercy to relieve us, and take away the judgments which our sins have brought upon us."* Therefore people are so bad, because they do not pray; compare Ps. xiv. 3, 4. *They are altogether become filthy, for they call not upon the Lord.* It bodes ill to a people, when prayer is restrained among them. (2.) It was very negligently performed; if there was here and there one that called on God's name, it was with a great deal of indifference; *There is none that stirs up himself to take hold of God.* Note, [1.] To pray is to take hold of God, by faith to take hold of the promises, and the declarations God has made of his good-will to us, and to plead them with him; to take hold of him as of one who is about to depart from us, earnestly begging of him not to leave us; or of one that is departed, soliciting his return; to take hold of him, as he that wrestles takes hold of him he wrestles with; for the seed of Jacob wrestle with him, and so prevail. But when we take hold of God, it is as the boatman with his hook takes hold on the shore as if he would pull the shore to him, but really it is to pull himself to the shore; so we pray, not to bring God to our mind, but to bring ourselves to him. [2.] Those that would take hold of God in

prayer so as to prevail with him, must stir up themselves to do it; all that is within us must be employed in the duty, (and all little enough) our thoughts fixed, and our affections flaming. In order hereunto, all that is within us must be engaged, and summoned into the service; we must *stir up the gift that is in us*, by an actual consideration of the importance of the work that is before us, and a close application of mind to it; but how can we expect that God should come to us in ways of mercy, when there are none that do this, when those that profess to be intercessors are mere triflers?

II. They acknowledge their afflictions to be the fruit and product of their own sins and God's wrath.

1. They brought their troubles upon themselves by their own folly; *"We are all as an unclean thing, and therefore we do all fade away as a leaf; (v. 6.)* we not only wither and lose our beauty, but we fall and drop off," (so the word signifies) "as leaves in autumn; our profession of religion withers, and we grow dry and sapless; our prosperity withers and comes to nothing; we fall to the ground, as despicable and contemptible; and then our iniquities like the wind have taken us away, and hurried us into captivity, as the winds in autumn blow off, and then blow away, the faded, withered leaves," Ps. i. 3, 4. Sinners are blasted, and then carried away, by the malignant and violent wind of their own iniquity; it withers them, and then ruins them.

2. God brought their troubles upon them by his wrath, (v. 7.) *Thou hast hid thy face from us;* been displeased with us, and refused to afford us any succour. When they made themselves as an *unclean thing*, no wonder that God turned his face away from them, as loathing them. Yet this was not all; *Thou hast consumed us because of our iniquities.* This is the same complaint with that, (Ps. xc. 7, 8.) *We are consumed by thine anger; thou hast melted us,* so the word is. God had them in the furnace, not to consume them as dross, but to melt them as gold, that they might be refined and new-cast.

III. They claim relation to God as their God, and humbly plead it with him, and in consideration of it cheerfully refer themselves to him; (v. 8.) *"But now, O Lord, thou art our Father:* though we have conducted ourselves very undutifully and ungratefully toward thee, yet still we have owned thee as our Father; and though thou hast corrected us, yet thou hast not cast us off; foolish and careless as we are, poor and despised, and trampled upon as we are by our enemies, yet still *thou art our Father;* to thee therefore we return in our repentance, as the prodigal arose, and came to his father; to thee we apply ourselves by prayer; from whom should we expect relief and succour but from our Father? It is the wrath of a Father that we are under, who will be reconciled, and not keep his anger for ever." God is their Father, 1. By creation; he gave them their being, formed them into a people, shaped them as he pleased; *We are the clay, and thou our Potter,* therefore we will not quarrel with thee, however thou art pleased to deal with us, Jer. xviii. 6. Nay, therefore we will hope that thou wilt deal well with us, that thou who madest us will new-make us, new-form us, though we have unmade and deformed ourselves. We are all as an *unclean thing, but we are all the work of thy hands,* therefore do away our uncleanness, that we may be fit for thy use, the use we were made for. We are the *work of thy hands,* therefore forsake us not, Ps. cxxxviii. 8. 2. By covenant; this is pleaded, v. 9. *"Behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people,* all the people thou hast in the world that make open profession of thy name. We are called *thy people*, our neighbours look upon us as such, and therefore what we suffer reflects upon thee; and the relief that our case requires is ex-

pected from thee. *We are thy people; and should not a people seek unto their God?* ch. viii. 19. *We are thine; save us.* Ps. cxix. 94. Note, When we are under providential rebukes from God, it is good to keep fast hold of our covenant relation to him.

IV. They are importunate with God for the turning away of his anger, and the pardoning of their sins; (v. 9) "*Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, though we have deserved that thou shouldst, neither remember iniquity for ever against us.*" They do not expressly pray for the removal of the judgment they were under, as to that, they refer themselves to God. But, 1. They pray that God would be reconciled to them, and then they can be easy, whether the affliction be continued or removed; "*Be not wroth to extremity, but let thine anger be mitigated by the clemency and compassion of a father.*" They do not say, *Lord rebuke us not*, for that may be necessary, but, *Not in thine anger, not in thy hot displeasure.* It is but in a little wrath that God hides his face. 2. They pray that they may not be dealt with according to the desert of their sin; *Neither remember iniquity for ever.* Such is the evil of sin, that it deserves to be remembered for ever; and this is that which they deprecate, that consequence of sin, which is for ever. *Those* make it to appear that they are truly humbled under the hand of God, who are more afraid of the terror of God's wrath and the fatal consequences of their own sin, than of any judgment whatsoever, looking upon these as the sting of death.

V. They lodge in the court of heaven a very melancholy representation, or memorial of the melancholy condition they were in, and the ruins they were groaning under.

1. Their own houses were in ruins, v. 10. The cities of Judah were destroyed by the Chaldeans, and the inhabitants of them were carried away, so that there was none to repair them or take any notice of them; which would in a few years make them look like perfect deserts; *Thy holy cities are a wilderness.* The cities of Judah are called *holy cities*, for the people were unto God a kingdom of priests. The cities had synagogues in them, in which God was served; and therefore they lamented the ruins of them, and insisted upon this in pleading with God for them, not so much that they were stately cities, rich or ancient ones, but that they were holy cities, cities in which God's name was known, professed, and called upon; these cities are a wilderness, the beauty of them is sullied, they are neither inhabited nor visited, as formerly; *They have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land*, Ps. lxxiv. 8. Nor was it only the lesser cities that were thus left as a wilderness unfrequented, but even *Zion is a wilderness*, the city of David itself lies in ruins, Jerusalem, that was *beautiful for situation and the joy of the whole earth*, is now deformed, and is become the scorn and scandal of the whole earth; that noble city is a desolation, a heap of rubbish. See what devastations sin brings upon a people; and an external profession of sanctity will be no fence against them; *holy cities*, if they become wicked cities, will be soonest of all turned into a wilderness, Amos iii. 2.

2. God's house was in ruins, v. 11. This they lament most of all, that *the temple was burned with fire*; but, as soon as it was built, they were told what their sin would bring it to; (2 Chron. vii. 21.) *This house which is high shall be an astonishment.* Observe how pathetically they bewail the ruins of the temple; (1.) It was *their holy and beautiful house*; it was a most sumptuous building, but the holiness of it was, in their eye, the greatest beauty of it, and, consequently, the profanation of it was the saddest part of its desolation, and that which

grieved them most, that the sacred services which used to be performed there, were discontinued. (2.) It was the place where *their fathers praised God* with their sacrifices and songs; what pity is it that that should lie in ashes, which had been for so many ages the glory of their nation! It aggravated their present disuse of the songs of Zion, that their fathers had so often praised God with them. They interest God in the cause, when they plead that it was the house where *he had been praised*, and put him in mind too of his covenant with their fathers, by taking notice of their fathers praising him. (3.) With it *all their pleasant things were laid waste*; all their desires and delights, all those things which were employed by them in the service of God, which they had a great delight in: not only the furniture of the temple, the altars and table, but especially the sabbaths and new moons, and all their religious feasts, which they used to keep with gladness; their ministers and solemn assemblies, these were all a desolation. Note, God's people reckon their sacred things their most delectable things; rob them of holy ordinances and the means of grace, and you *lay waste all their pleasant things*; What have they more? Observe here how God and his people have their interests twisted and interchanged; when they speak of the cities for their own habitation, they call them *thy holy cities*, for to God they were dedicated; when they speak of the temple wherein God dwelt, they call it *our beautiful house*, and its furniture *our pleasant things*, for they had heartily espoused it, and all the interests of it. If thus we interest God in all our concerns by devoting them to his service, and interest ourselves in all his concerns by laying them near our hearts, we may with satisfaction leave both with him, for he will perfect both.

VI. They conclude with an affectionate expostulation, humbly arguing with God concerning their present desolations; (v. 12.) "*Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things? Or, Canst thou contain thyself at these things?*" Canst thou see thy temple ruined, and not resent it, not revenge it? Has the jealous God forgotten to be jealous, (Ps. lxxiv. 22.) *Arise, O God, plead thine own cause.* Lord, thou art insulted, thou art blasphemed; and *wilt thou hold thy peace*, and take no notice of it? Shall the highest affronts that can be done to heaven, pass unrebuked?" When we are abused, we hold our peace, because vengeance does not belong to us, and because we have a God to refer our cause to. When God is injured in his honour, it may justly be expected that he should speak in the vindication of it; his people prescribe not to him what he shall say, but their prayer is, (as here,) Ps. lxxxiii. 1. *Keep not thou silence, O God!* and Ps. cix. 1. "*Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise.*" Speak for the conviction of thine enemies, speak for the comfort and relief of thy people; *for wilt thou afflict us very sore, or afflict us for ever?* It is a sore affliction to good people, to see God's sanctuary laid waste, and nothing done toward the raising of it out of its ruins. But God has said that *he will not contend for ever*, and therefore his people may depend upon it, that their afflictions shall be neither to extremity, nor to eternity, but light, and for a moment.

## CHAP. LXV.

We are now drawing toward the conclusion of this evangelical prophecy, the two last chapters of which direct us to look as far forward as the new heavens and the new earth, the new world which the gospel-dispensation should bring in, and the separation that should by it be made between the precious and the vile; *For judgment* (says Christ) *am I come into this world.* And why should it seem absurd that the prophet here should speak of that to which all the prophets bare witness? 1 Pet. i.

10, 11. The rejection of the Jews, and the calling in of the Gentiles, are often mentioned in the New Testament, as that which was foreseen and foretold by the prophets, *Acts* x. 43.—xiii. 40. *Rom.* xvi. 26. In this chapter, we have, I. The preventing of the Gentiles with the gospel call, v. 1. II. The rejection of the Jews for their obstinacy and unbelief, v. 2..7. III. The saving of a remnant of them, by bringing them into the gospel church, v. 8..10. IV. The judgments of God, that should pursue the rejected Jews, v. 11..16. V. The blessings reserved for the Christian church, which should be its joy and glory, v. 17..25. But these things are here prophesied of under the type and figure of the difference God would make between some and others of the Jews, after their return out of captivity, between those that feared God and those that did not; with reproofs of the sins then found among them, and promises of the blessings then in reserve for them.

1. **I** AM sought of *them that asked not for me*; I am found of *them that sought me not*: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation *that was not called by my name*. 2. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way *that was not good*, after their own thoughts. 3. A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; 4. Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments; which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable *things is in their vessels*; 5. Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These *are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day*. 6. Behold, *it is written before me*; I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom, 7. Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the LORD, which have burnt incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom.

The apostle Paul (an expositor we may depend upon) has given us the true sense of these verses, and told us what was the event they pointed at, and were fulfilled in, namely, the calling in of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews, by the preaching of the gospel, *Rom.* x. 20, 21. And he observes, that herein *Isaiah is very bold*, not only in foretelling a thing so improbable ever to be brought about, but in foretelling it to the Jews, who would take it as a gross affront to their nation, and therein Moses's words would be made good, (*Deut.* xxxii. 21.) *I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people*.

I. It is here foretold that the Gentiles, who had been afar off, should be made nigh, v. 1. Paul reads it thus, *I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest to them that asked not for me*. Observe what a wonderful and blessed change was made with them, and how they were surprised into it, 1. Those who had long been without God in the world, shall now be set a-seeking him; those who had not said, *Where is God my Maker?* shall now begin to inquire after him: neither they nor their fathers had called upon his name, but either lived without prayer, or prayed to stocks and stones, the work of men's hands. But now they shall be *baptized, and call on the name of the Lord*, *Acts* ii.

21. With what pleasure does the great God here speak of his being sought unto, and how does he glory in it; especially by those who in time past had not asked for him! For there is joy in heaven over great sinners who repent. 2. God shall prevent their prayers with his blessings; *I am found of them that sought me not*. This happy acquaintance and correspondence between God and the Gentile world began on his side; they came to know God because they were *known of him*, (*Gal.* iv. 9.) to seek God and find him because they were first sought and found of him. Though in after-communion God is found of those that seek him, (*Prov.* viii. 17.) yet in the first conversion he is found of those that seek him not; for *therefore we love him, because he first loved us*. The design of the bounty of common providence to them, was, *that they might seek the Lord, if haply they should feel after him, and find him*, *Acts* xvii. 27. But they sought him not, still he was to them an *unknown God*, and yet God was found of them. 3. God gave the advantages of a divine revelation to them who had never made a profession of religion; *I said, Behold me, behold me, gave them a sight of me, and invited them to take the comfort and benefit of it, who were not called by my name*, as the Jews for many ages had been. When the apostles went about from place to place, preaching the gospel, this was the substance of what they preached: "*Behold God, behold him, turn toward him, fix the eyes of your minds upon him, acquaint yourselves with him, admire him, adore him; look off your idols that you have made, and look upon the living God who made you*." Christ in them said, *Behold me, behold me with an eye of faith; look unto me and be ye saved*. And this was said to those that had long been *lo-amini, and lo-ruhamah*, (*Hos.* i. 8, 9.) *not a people, and that had not obtained mercy*, *Rom.* ix. 25, 26.

II. It is here foretold that the Jews, who had long been a people near to God, should be cast off and set at a distance, v. 2. The apostle applies this to the Jews in his time, as a seed of evil-doers; (*Rom.* x. 21.) *But to Israel he saith, All day long have I stretched forth my hand unto a disobedient and gainsaying people*. Where observe, 1. How the Jews were courted to the divine grace. God himself, by his prophets, by his Son, by his apostles, *stretched forth his hands to them*, as Wisdom did, *Prov.* i. 24. *God spread out his hands to them*, as one reasoning and expostulating with them; not only beckoned to them with the finger, but *spread out his hands*, as being ready to embrace and entertain them; reaching forth the tokens of his favour to them, and importuning them to accept of them. When Christ was crucified, his hands were *spread out and stretched forth*, as if he were preparing to receive returning sinners into his bosom; and this *all the day*, all the gospel-day; he waited to be gracious, and was not weary of waiting; even those that came in at the eleventh hour of the day were not rejected. 2. How they contemned the invitation; it was given to a rebellious and gainsaying people; they were bidden to the wedding supper, and would not come, but *rejected the counsel of God against themselves*. Now here we have,

(1.) The bad character of this people; the world shall see that it is not for nothing that they are rejected of God; no, it is for their whoredoms that they are put away. Their character in general is such as one would not expect them to deserve, who had been so much the favourites of Heaven. [1.] They were very wilful; right or wrong they would do as they had a mind. "They generally walk on in a way *that is not good*, not the right way, not a safe way, for they *walk after their own thoughts*, their own devices and desires." If our guide be our own thoughts, our way is not likely to be good; for

every imagination of the thought of our hearts is only evil. God had told them his thoughts, what his mind and will were; but they would walk after their own thoughts, would do what they thought best. [2.] They were very provoking! this was God's complaint of them all along—they grieved him, they vexed his Holy Spirit, as if they would contrive how to make him their Enemy. They provoke me to anger continually to my face. They cared not what affront they gave to God, though it were in his sight and presence, in a downright contempt of his authority, and defiance of his justice; and this continually; it had been their way and manner ever since they were a people; witness the day of temptation in the wilderness.

The prophet speaks more particularly of their iniquities, and the iniquities of their fathers, as the ground of God's casting them off, v. 7. Now he gives instances of both.

First, The most provoking iniquity of their fathers was, idolatry; this, the prophet tells them, was provoking God to his face; and it is an iniquity which, as appears by the second commandment, God often visits upon the children. This was the sin that brought them into captivity, and, though the captivity pretty well cured them of it, yet, when the final ruin of that nation came, that was again brought into the account against them; for in the day when God visits, he will visit that, Exod. xxxii. 34. Perhaps there were many, long after the captivity, who, though they did not worship other gods, were yet guilty of the disorders here mentioned; for they married strange wives. 1. They forsook God's temple, and sacrificed in gardens or groves, that they might have the satisfaction of doing it in their own way, for they liked not God's institutions. 2. They forsook God's altar, and burned incense upon bricks, altars of their own contriving; they burned incense according to their own inventions, which were of no more value, in comparison with God's institution, than an altar of bricks in comparison with the golden altar which God appointed them to burn incense on: or upon tiles, so some read it; such as they covered their flat-roofed houses with, and on them sometimes they burned incense to their idols, as appears, 2 Kings xxxiii. 12. where we read of altars on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, and Jer. xix. 13. of their burning incense to the host of heaven upon the roofs of their houses. 3. "They use necromancy, or consulting with the dead, and, in order to that, they remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments," to seek for the living to the dead, (ch. viii. 19.) as the witch of Endor. Or, They used to consult the evil spirits that haunted the sepulchres. 4. They violated the laws of God about their meat, and broke through the distinction between clean and unclean, before it was taken away by the gospel. They ate swine's flesh; some indeed chose rather to die than to do it, as Eleazer and the seven brethren in the story of the Maccabees. But it is probable that many ate of it, especially when it came to be a condition of life. In our Saviour's time, we read of a vast herd of swine among them; which gives us cause to suspect that there were many then who made so little conscience of the law as to eat swine's flesh, for which they were justly punished in the destruction of the swine. And the broth, or pieces, of other forbidden meats, called here *abominable things*, was in their vessels, and made use of for food. The forbidden meat is called an *abomination*, and they that meddle with it are said to *make themselves abominable*, Lev. xi. 42, 43. Those that durst not eat the meat, yet made bold with the broth, because they would come as near as might be to that which was forbidden, to show how they coveted the forbidden fruit. Perhaps this is here put figuratively

for all forbidden pleasures and profits which are obtained by sin, that *abominable thing which the Lord hates*; they loved to be dallying with it, to be tasting of its broth. But those who thus take a pride in venturing upon the borders of sin, and the brink of it, are in danger of falling into the depths of it. But,

Secondly, The most provoking iniquity of the Jews in our Saviour's time was, their pride and hypocrisy, that sin of the scribes and Pharisees, against which Christ denunced so many woes, v. 5. They say, "*Stand by thyself, keep off;*" (*get thee to thine, so the original is;*) "*keep to thy own companions, but come not near to me, lest thou pollute me; touch me not, I will not allow thee any familiarity with me, for I am holier than thou,* and therefore thou art not good enough to converse with me; *I am not as other men are, nor even as this publican.*" This they were ready to say to every one they met with, so that, in saying, *I am holier than thou*, they thought themselves holier than any; not only very good, as good as they should be, as good as they needed to be, but better than any of their neighbours. *These are a smoke in my nose*, (says God,) such a smoke as comes not from a quick fire, which soon becomes glowing and pleasant, but from a fire of wet wood, which *burns all the day*, and is nothing but smoke. Note, Nothing in men is more odious and offensive to God than a proud conceit of themselves, and contempt of others; for commonly those are *most unholy of all*, that think themselves *holier than any*.

(2.) The controversy God had with them for this. The proof against them is plain; *Behold, it is written before me*, v. 6. It is written, to be remembered against them in time to come; for they may not perhaps be immediately reckoned with. The sins of sinners, and particularly the vainglorious boasts and scorns of hypocrites, are *laid up in store* with God, Deut. xxxii. 34. And what is written shall be read and preceded upon; "*I will not keep silence always*, though I may keep silence long." They shall not think him altogether such a one as themselves, as sometimes they have done; but *he will recompense, even recompense into their bosom*. Those basely abuse religion, that honourable and sacred thing, who make their profession of it the matter of their pride, and the jealous God will reckon with them for it; the profession they boast of shall but serve to aggravate their condemnation. [1.] The iniquity of their fathers shall come against them; not but that their own sin, deserved whatever judgments God brought upon them, and much heavier; and they owned it, Ezra ix. 13. But God would not have wrought so great a desolation upon them, if he had not therein had an eye to the sins of their fathers. Therefore in the last destruction of Jerusalem God is said to bring upon them the blood of the Old Testament martyrs, even that of *Abel*, Matth. xxiii. 35. God will reckon with them, not only for their fathers' idols but for their *high places*, their *burning incens*, upon the mountains and the hills, though perhaps it was to the true God only. This was blaspheming or reproaching God, it was a reflection upon the choice he had made of the place where he would record his name, and the promise he had made, that there he would meet them, and bless them. [2.] Their own with that shall bring ruin upon them; *Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers* together, the one aggravating the other, constitute the former work, which though it may seem to be overlooked and forgotten, shall be *measured into their bosom*. God will render into the bosom, not only of his open enemies, (Ps. lxxix. 12.) but of his false and treacherous friends, the *reproach wherewith they have reproached him*.



8. Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and *one* saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all. 9. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. 10. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me.

This is expounded by St. Paul, Rom. xi. 1.—5, where, when upon occasion of the rejection of the Jews, it is asked, *Hath God then cast away his people?* he answers, No; for, *at this time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.* This prophecy has reference to that distinguished remnant. When that hypocritical nation is to be destroyed, God will separate and secure to himself some from among them; some of the Jews shall be brought to embrace the Christian faith, shall be added to the church, and so be saved. And our Saviour has told us, that *for the sake of these elect*, the days of the destruction of the Jews should be shortened, and a stop put to the desolation, which otherwise would have proceeded to that degree, that *no flesh should be saved*, Matth. xxiv. 22. Now,

1. This is illustrated here by a comparison, v. 8. When a vine is so blasted and withered, that there seems to be no sap or life in it, and therefore the dresser of the vineyard is inclined to pluck it up, or cut it down, yet, if ever so little of the juice of the grape, fit to make new wine, be found, though but in one cluster, a stander-by interposes, and says, *Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it*; there is life in the root, and hope that yet it may become good for something. Good men are blessings to the places where they live; and sometimes God spares whole cities and nations for the sake of a few such in them. How ambitious should we be of this honour, not only to be distinguished from others, but serviceable to others!

2. Here is a description of those that shall make up this saved saving remnant; (1.) They are such as serve God; It is for *my servant's sake*, (v. 8.) and they are *my servants* that shall dwell there, v. 9. God's faithful servants, however they are looked upon, are the best friends their country has; and those who serve him, therein *serve their generation*. (2.) They are such as seek God; as make it the end of their lives to glorify God, and the business of their lives to call upon him. It is for *my people that have sought me*. They that seek God shall find him, and shall find him their bountiful Rewarder.

3. Here is an account of the mercy God has in store for them. The remnant that shall return out of captivity shall have a happy settlement again in their own land, and that by an hereditary right, as a seed out of Jacob, in whom the family is kept up and the entail preserved; and from whom, as from the seed sown, shall spring a numerous increase; and these typify the remnant of Jacob that shall be incorporated into the gospel-church by faith. (1.) They shall have a good portion for themselves; They shall *inherit my mountains*, the holy mountains on which Jerusalem and the temple were built: or, the mountains of Canaan, *the land of promise*, typifying the covenant of grace, which all God's servants, his elect, both inhabit and inherit; they make it their refuge, their rest and residence, so they dwell in it, are at home in it; and they have taken

it to be their heritage for ever, and it shall be to them an inheritance incorruptible. God's chosen, the spiritual seed of praying Jacob, shall be the inheritors of his mountains of bliss and joy, and shall be carried safe to them through the vale of tears. (2.) They shall have a *green pasture* for their flocks, v. 10. *Sharon and the valley of Achor* shall again be as well replenished as ever they were, with cattle. Sharon lay westward, near Joppa. Achor lay eastward, near Jordan; which intimates, that they shall recover the possession of *the whole land*, that they shall have wherewith to *stock it all*, and that they shall peaceably enjoy it, and there shall be none to disturb them, or make them afraid. Gospel-ordinances are the fields and valleys where the sheep of Christ *shall go in and out, and find pasture*, (John x. 9.) and where they are *made to lie down*, (Ps. xxiii. 2.) as Israel's herds in *the valley of Achor*, Hos. ii. 15.

11. But ye are they that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink-offering unto that number. 12. Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear: but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not. 13. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: 14. Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. 15. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name: 16. That he who blesseth himself in the earth, shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth, shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.

Here the different states of the godly and wicked, of the Jews that believed, and of those that still persisted in unbelief, are set the one over against the other, as life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse.

1. Here is the fearful doom of those that persisted in their idolatry after the deliverance out of Babylon, and in infidelity after the preaching of the gospel of Christ. The doom is the same upon both; (v. 12.) "*I will number you to the sword*, as sheep for the slaughter, and there shall be no escaping, no standing out, *ye shall all bow down to it*." God's judgments come, 1. Regularly, and are executed according to the commission. Those fall by the sword, that are numbered or counted out to it, and none besides. Though the sword seems to devour promiscuously *one as well as another*, yet it is made to know its number, and shall not exceed. 2. Irresistibly; the strongest and most stout-hearted sinners shall be forced to bow before them; for none ever hardened their hearts against God, and prospered. Now observe what the sins are, *that number them to the sword*.

(1.) Idolatry was the ancient sin; (v. 11.) "*Ye are they, who instead of seeking me, and serving me as my people, forsake the Lord, disown him, and cast him off to embrace other gods; who forget my holy mountain, (the privileges it confers, and the obligations it lays you under,) to burn incense upon the mountains of your idols, (v. 7.) and have deserted the only living and true God.*" They prepared a table for that troop of deities, which the heathen worship, and pour out drink-offerings to that numberless number of them; for they that thought one God too little, never thought scores and hundreds sufficient, but were still adding to the number of them, till they had as many gods as cities, and their altars were as thick as *heaps in the furrows of the field*, Hos. xii. 11. Some take *Gad and Meni*, which we translate a *troop* and a *number*, to be the proper names of two of their idols, answering to Jupiter and Mercury; whatever they were, their worshippers spared no cost to do them honour; they prepared a table for them, and filled out mixed wine for drink-offerings to them; they would pinch their families rather than stint their devotions, which should shame the worshippers of the true God out of their niggardliness.

(2.) Infidelity was the sin of the latter Jews; (v. 12.) *When I called ye did not answer*; which refers to the same that v. 2. did, *I have stretched out my hands to a rebellious people*; and that is applied to those who rejected the gospel. Our Lord Jesus himself called, (he stood and cried, John vii. 37.) but they did not hear, they would not answer; they were not convinced by his reasonings, nor moved by his expostulations; both the fair warnings he gave them of death and ruin, and the fair offers he made them of life and happiness, were slighted, and made no impression upon them. Yet this was not all; *Ye did evil before mine eyes*, not by surprise, or through inadvertency, but with deliberation; *Ye did choose that wherein I delighted not*; he means, which he utterly detested and abhorred. It is not strange that those who will not be persuaded to choose that which is good, persist in their choice and pursuit of that which is evil. See the malignity of sin; it is evil in God's eyes, highly offensive to him, and yet it is committed before his eyes, in his sight and presence, and in contempt of him; it is likewise a contradiction to the will of God; it is doing that, of choice, which we know will displease him.

II. The aggravation of this doom, from the consideration of the happy state of those that were brought to repentance and faith. The blessedness of those that serve God, and the woful condition of those that rebel against him, are here set the one over against the other, that they may serve as a foil to each other, v. 13.—16. 1. God's servants may well think themselves happy, and for ever indebted to that free grace which made them so, when they see how miserable some of their neighbours are, for want of that grace, who are hardened, and likely to perish for ever in unbelief, and what a narrow escape they had of being among them. See ch. lxvi. 24. 2. It will add to the grief of those that perish, to see the happiness of God's servants, whom they had hated and vilified, and looked upon with the utmost disdain; and especially to think that they might have shared in their bliss, if it had not been their own fault. It made the torment of the rich man in hell the more grievous, that he saw *Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom*; (Luke xvi. 23.) see Luke xiii. 28. Sometimes the providence of God makes such a difference as this between good and bad in this world, and the prosperity of the righteous becomes a grievous eye-sore and vexation of heart to the wicked, Ps. cxlii. 10. It will, however, be so in the great day; *We fools*

*counted his life madness, and his end without honour; but now, how is he numbered with the saints, and his lot is among the chosen!*

Now the difference of their states here lies in two things:

(1.) In point of comfort and satisfaction. [1.] God's servants shall eat and drink; they shall have the bread of life to feed, to feast upon continually, shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of his house, and shall want nothing that is good for them. Heaven's happiness will be to them an everlasting feast; they shall be filled with that which now they hunger and thirst after. But those who set their hearts upon the world, and place their happiness in that, shall be hungry and thirsty, always empty, always craving; for it is not bread, it surfeits, but it satisfies not. In communion with God, and dependence upon him, there is full satisfaction, but in sinful pursuits there is nothing but disappointment. [2.] God's servants shall rejoice and sing for joy of heart; they have constant cause for joy, and there is nothing that may be an occasion of grief to them, but they have an allay sufficient for it. As far as faith is an act and exercise, they have a heart to rejoice, and their joy is their strength. They shall rejoice in their hope, because it shall not make them ashamed. Heaven will be a world of everlasting joy to all that are now sowing in tears. But, on the other hand, they that forsake the Lord shut themselves out from all true joy, for *they shall be ashamed of their vain confidence in themselves, and their own righteousness, and the hopes they had built thereon*. When the expectations of bliss, wherewith they had flattered themselves, are frustrated, O what confusion will fill their faces! Then shall they cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit; perhaps in this world, when their laughter shall be turned into mourning and their joy into heaviness; at furthest, in that world, where the torment will be endless, caseless, and remediless; nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, to eternity. Let these two be compared; *Now he is comforted, and Thou art tormented*; and which of the two will we choose to take our lot with?

(2.) In point of honour and reputation, v. 15, 16. The memory of the just is, and shall be, blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot. [1.] The name of the idolaters and unbelievers shall be left for a curse, shall be loaded with ignominy, and made for ever infamous. It shall be used in giving bad characters—*Thou art as cruel as a Jew*; and in imprecations—*God make thee as miserable as a Jew*. It shall be for a curse to God's chosen, for a warning to them; they shall be afraid of falling under the curse upon the Jewish nation; of perishing by the same example of unbelief. The curse of those whom God rejects, should make his chosen stand in awe. *The Lord God shall slay thee*; he shall quite extirpate the Jews, and cut them off from being a people; they shall no longer live as a nation, nor ever be incorporated again. [2.] The name of God's chosen shall become a blessing; *He shall call his servants by another name*. The children of the covenant shall no longer be called *Jews*, but *Christians*; and to them, under that name, all the promises and privileges of the new covenant shall be secured. This other name shall be an honourable name; it shall not be confined to one nation, but with it men shall *bless themselves in the earth*, all the world over. God shall have servants out of all nations, that shall all be dignified with this new name. First, They shall give honour to God both in their prayers and in their solemn oaths; in their addresses for his favour as their felicity, and their appeals to his justice as their Judge. This is a part of the homage we owe to God; we must *bless our-*

*selves in him*, we must reckon that we have enough to make us happy, that we need no more, and can desire no more, if we have him for our God. It is of great consequence to determine what that is, which we bless ourselves in, which we most please ourselves with, and value ourselves by our interest in. Worldly people bless themselves in the abundance they have of this world's goods; (Ps. xlix. 18. Luke xii. 19.) but God's servants bless themselves in him, as a God all-sufficient for them. He is their Crown of glory and Diadem of beauty, their Strength and Portion. By him also *they shall swear*, and not by any creature or any false god. To his judgment they shall refer themselves, from whom every man's judgment doth proceed. *Secondly*, They shall give honour to him as the *God of truth; the God of the Amen*; so the word is. Some understand it of Christ, who is himself the *Amen*, the *faithful Witness*, (Rev. iii. 14.) and in whom all the promises are *yea and amen*, 2 Cor. i. 20. In him we must bless ourselves, and by him we must swear unto the Lord, and covenant with him. He that is *blessed in the earth*, (so some read it,) *shall be blessed in the true God*, for Christ is *the true God*, and *eternal life*, 1 John v. 20. And it was promised of old that *in him should all the families of the earth be blessed*, Gen. xii. 3. Some read it, *He shall bless himself in the God of the faithful people*; in God as the God of all believers; desiring no more than to share in the blessings wherewith they are blessed, to be dealt with as he deals with them. *Thirdly*, They shall give him honour as the Author of this blessed change, which they have the experience of; they shall think themselves happy in having him for their God, who has made them to forget their former troubles, the remembrance of them being swallowed up in their present comforts; because *they are hid from God's eyes*, they are quite taken away; for if there were any remainder of their troubles, God would be sure to have his eye upon it, in compassion to them and concern for them. They shall no longer feel them, for God will no longer see them: He is pleased to speak as if he would make himself easy by making them easy; and therefore they shall with a great deal of satisfaction bless themselves in him.

17. For, behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. 18. But be you glad and rejoice for ever in *that* which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. 19. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. 20. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die a hundred years old; but the sinner, *being* a hundred years old, shall be accursed. 21. And they shall build houses, and inhabit *them*; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. 22. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree *are* the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 23. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble: for they *are* the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their

offspring with them. 24. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. 25. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust *shall be* the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

If these promises were in part fulfilled when the Jews, after their return out of captivity, were settled in peace in their own land, and brought as it were into a new world, yet they were to have their full accomplishment in the gospel-church, militant first, and at length triumphant; *The Jerusalem that is from above is free, and is the mother of us all*. In the graces and comforts which believers have in and from Christ, we are to look for this new heaven and new earth. It is in the gospel that *old things are fast away, and all things are become new*, and by it that those who are in Christ are *new creatures*, 2 Cor. v. 17. It was a mighty and happy change that was described, v. 16, *that the former troubles were forgotten*; but here it rises much higher, even the *former world* shall be *forgotten, and shall no more come in mind*. They that were converted to the Christian faith were so transported with the comforts of it, that all the comforts they were before acquainted with, became as nothing to them; not only their foregoing griefs, but their foregoing joys, were lost and swallowed up in this. The glorified saints will *therefore* have forgotten this world, because they will be entirely taken up with the other. *For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth*. See how inexhaustible the divine power is; the same God that created one heaven and earth, can create another. See how entire the happiness of the saints is; it shall be all of a piece: with the new heavens God will create them (if they have occasion for it to make them happy) a new earth too. *The world is yours*, if you be Christ's, 1 Cor. iii. 22. When God is reconciled to us, which gives us a new heaven, the creatures too are reconciled to us, which gives us a new earth. The future glory of the saints will be so entirely different from what they ever knew before, that it may well be called *new heavens, and a new earth*, 2 Pet. iii. 13. *Behold, I make all things new*, Rev. xxi. 5.

1. There shall be new joys. For, (1.) All the church's friends, and all that belong to her, shall rejoice; (v. 18.) You shall *be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create*. The new things which God creates in and by his gospel, are, and shall be, matter of everlasting joy to all believers. *My servants shall rejoice*; (v. 13.) at last they shall, though now they mourn. *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*. (2.) The church shall be the matter of their joy; so pleasant, so prosperous, shall her condition be; *I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy*. The church shall not only rejoice, but be rejoiced in. Those that have sorrowed with the church, shall rejoice with her. (3.) The prosperity of the church shall be a rejoicing to God himself, who has *pleasure in the prosperity of his servants*; (v. 19.) *I will rejoice in Jerusalem's joy, and will joy in my people; for in all their affliction he was afflicted*. God will not only rejoice in the church's well-doing, but will himself *rejoice to do her good, and rest in his love* to her, Zech. iii. 17. What God rejoices in, it becomes us to rejoice in. (4.) There shall be no alloy of this joy, nor any alteration of this happy condition of the church; *The voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her*. If this relate to any state of the church in this life, it means

no more than that the former occasions of grief shall not return, but God's people shall long enjoy an uninterrupted tranquillity. But in heaven it shall have a full accomplishment, in respect both of the perfection and the perpetuity of the promised joy; *there all tears shall be wiped away.*

2. There shall be new life, *v. 20.* Untimely deaths by the sword or sickness shall be no more known as they have been, and by this means there shall be *no more the voice of crying, v. 19.* When there shall be *no more death, there shall be no more sorrow, Rev. xxi. 4.* As death has reigned by sin, *so life shall reign by righteousness, Rom. v. 14, 21.* (1.) Believers through Christ shall be satisfied with life, though it be ever so short on earth. If an infant end its days quickly, yet it shall not be reckoned to die untimely, for the shorter its life is, the longer will its rest be; though *death reign over them that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression*, yet they, dying in the arms of Christ, the second Adam, and belonging to his kingdom, are not to be called *infants of days*, but even the child shall be reckoned to *die a hundred years old*, for he shall rise again at full age, shall rise to eternal life. Some understand it of children who in their childhood are so eminent for wisdom and grace, and by death nipt in the blossom, that they may be said to die a hundred years old. And as for old men, it is promised that *they shall fill their days with the fruits of righteousness*, which they shall still bring forth in old age; *to show that the Lord is upright*, and then it is a *good old age*. An old man, who is wise, and good, and useful, may truly be said to have *filled his days*. Old men, who have their hearts upon the world, have never filled their days, never have enough of this world, but would still continue longer in it. But that man dies old and *satur diem—full of days*, who, with Simeon, having seen God's salvation, desires now to depart in peace. (2.) Unbelievers shall be unsatisfied and unhappy in life, though it be ever so long. The sinner, though he live to be *a hundred years old, shall be accursed*; his living so long shall be no token to him of the divine favour and blessing, nor shall it be any shelter to him from the divine wrath and curse; the sentence he lies under will certainly be executed, and his long life is but a long reprieve; nay, it is itself a curse to him, for the longer he lives, the more wrath he treasures up against the day of wrath, and the more sins he will have to answer for. So that the matter is not great, whether our lives on earth be long or short, but whether we live the lives of saints or the lives of sinners.

3. There shall be a new enjoyment of the comforts of life; that, whereas before it was very uncertain and precarious, their enemies *inhabited the houses which they built*, and *ate the fruit of the trees which they planted*, now it shall be otherwise; they shall *build houses, and inhabit them*, shall *plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them, v. 21, 22.* This intimates that the labour of their hands shall be blessed and be made to prosper; they shall gain what they aimed at; and what they have gained shall be preserved and secured to them; they shall enjoy it comfortably, and nothing shall imbitter it to them, and they shall live to enjoy it long. Strangers shall not break in upon them, to expel them, and plant themselves in their room, as sometimes they have done; *Mine elect shall wear out, or long enjoy, the work of their hands*; it is honestly got, and it will wear well; it is *the work of their hands*, which they themselves have laboured for, and it is most comfortable to enjoy that, and not to eat the *bread of idleness or bread of deceit*; if we have a heart to enjoy it, that is the gift of God's grace; (*Ecc. iii. 13.*) and if we live to enjoy it long, it is the gift of God's providence, for that is here promised; *As the*

*days of a tree, are the days of my people*; as the *days of an oak, (ch. vi. 13.) whose substance is in it, though it cast its leaves*; though it be stripped every winter, it recovers itself again, and lasts many ages; as the *days of the tree of life*; so the *LXX.* Christ is to them the tree of life, and in him believers enjoy all those spiritual comforts which are typified by the abundance of temporal blessings here promised; and it shall not be in the power of their enemies to deprive them of these blessings, or disturb them in the enjoyment of them.

4. There shall be a new generation rising up in their stead, to inherit and enjoy these blessings; (*v. 23.*) *They shall not labour in vain*, for they shall not only enjoy the work of their hands themselves, but they shall leave it with satisfaction to those that shall come after them, and not with such a melancholy prospect as Solomon did; (*Ecc. ii. 18, 19.*) *They shall not beget and bring forth children for trouble*; for they are themselves the *seed of the blessed of the Lord*, and there is a blessing entailed upon them by descent from their ancestors, which their offspring with them shall partake of, and shall be, as well as they, *the seed of the blessed of the Lord.* They shall not bring forth for trouble; for, (1.) God will make their children that rise up comforts to them; they shall have the joy of *seeing them walk in the truth.* (2.) He will make the times that come after comfortable to their children; as they shall be good, so it shall be well with them; they shall not be brought forth to days of trouble; nor shall it ever be said, *Blessed is the womb that bare not.* In the gospel-church Christ's name shall be borne up by a succession; *A seed shall serve him, (Ps. xxii. 30.) the seed of the blessed of the Lord.*

5. There shall be a good correspondence between them and their God; (*v. 24.*) *Even before they call, I will answer.* God will prevent their prayers with the blessings of his goodness; David did but say, *I will confess, and God forgave, Ps. xxxii. 5.* The father of the prodigal met him in his return; *While they are yet speaking*, before they have finished their prayer, I will give them the thing they pray for, or the assurances and earnest of it. These are high expressions of God's readiness to hear prayer; and this appears much more in the grace of the gospel than it did under the law; we owe the comfort of it to the mediation of Christ as our Advocate with the Father, and are obliged in gratitude to give a ready ear to God's calls.

6. There shall be a good correspondence between them and their neighbours; (*v. 25.*) *The wolf and the lamb shall feed together*, as they did in Noah's ark. God's people, though they are as sheep in the midst of wolves, shall be safe and unhurt; for God will not so much break the power, and tie the hands, of their enemies, as formerly; but he will turn their hearts, will alter their dispositions by his grace. When Paul, who had been a persecutor of the disciples, (who, being of the tribe of Benjamin, ravened as a wolf, *Gen. xlix. 27.*) joined himself to them and became one of them, then *the wolf and the lamb fed together.* So also when the enmity between the Jews and Gentiles was slain, all hostilities ceased, and they fed together as one sheepfold under Christ the great Shepherd, *John x. 16.* The enemies of the church ceased to do the mischief they had done, and its members ceased to be so quarrelsome with, and injuries to, one another as they had been, so that there was none either from without or from within to hurt or destroy, none to disturb it, much less to ruin it, *in all the holy mountain*; as was promised, *ch. xi. 9.* For, (1.) Men shall be changed; the lion shall no more be a beast of prey, as perhaps he never would have been if sin had not entered, but shall *eat straw like the bullock*, shall *know his owner*, and *his master's crib*, as the

ox does. When those that lived by spoil and rapine, and coveted to enrich themselves, right or wrong, are brought by the grace of God to accommodate themselves to their condition, to live by honest labour, and to be content with such things as they have; when they that stole steal no more, but work with their hands the thing that is good, then this is fulfilled, that *the lion shall eat straw like the bullock*. (2.) Satan shall be chained, the dragon bound; for *dust shall be the serpent's meat again*. That great enemy, when he has been let loose, has glutted and regaled himself with the precious blood of saints, who by his instigation have been persecuted, and with the precious souls of sinners, who by his instigation have become persecutors, and have ruined themselves for ever; but now he shall be confined to dust, according to the sentence, *On thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat*, Gen. iii. 14. All the enemies of God's church, that are subtle and venomous as serpents, shall be conquered and subdued, and be made to lick the dust. Christ shall reign as Zion's King, till all the enemies of his kingdom be made his footstool, and theirs too. In the holy mountain above, and there only, shall this promise have its full accomplishment, that there shall be none to hurt or destroy.

### CHAP. LXVI.

The scope of this chapter is much the same as that of the foregoing chapter, and many expressions of it are the same; it therefore looks the same way, to the different state of the good and bad among the Jews, at their return out of captivity; but that typifying the rejection of the Jews in the days of the Messiah, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the setting up of the gospel-kingdom in the world. The first verse of the chapter is applied by Stephen to the dismantling of the temple by the planting of the Christian church; (*Acts vii. 49, 50.*) which may serve as a key to the whole chapter. We have here, I. The contempt God puts upon ceremonial services in comparison with moral duties, and an intimation therein of his purpose shortly to put an end to the temple and sacrifice, and reject those that adhered to them, v. 1.. 4. II. The salvation God will in due time work for his people, out of the hands of their oppressors, (v. 5.) speaking terror to the persecutors, (v. 6.) and comfort to the persecuted, a speedy and complete deliverance, (v. 7.. 9.) a joyful settlement, (v. 10, 11.) the accession of the Gentiles to them, and abundance of satisfaction therein, v. 12.. 14. III. The terrible vengeance which God will bring upon the enemies of his church and people, v. 15.. 18. IV. The happy establishment of the church upon large and sure foundations, its constant attendance on God, and triumph over its enemies, v. 19.. 25. And we may well expect that this evangelical prophet, here, in the close of his prophecy, should (as he does) look as far forward as to the latter days, to the last day, to the days of eternity.

1. **THUS** saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? 2. For all those things hath my hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. 3. He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol: yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. 4. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none

did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.

Here,

I. The temple is slighted in comparison with a *gracious soul*, v. 1, 2. The Jews in the prophet's time, and afterward, in Christ's time, gloried much in the temple, and promised themselves great things from it; to humble them therefore, and to shake their vain confidence, both the prophets and Christ foretold the ruin of the temple, that God would leave it, and then it would soon be desolate. After it was destroyed by the Chaldeans, it soon recovered itself, and the ceremonial services were revived with it; but by the Romans it was made a perpetual desolation, and the ceremonial law was abolished with it. That the world might be prepared for this, they were often told, as here, of what little account the temple was with God.

1. That he did not need it. Heaven is the throne of his glory and government; there he sits, infinitely exalted in the highest dignity and dominion, above all blessing and praise. The earth is his footstool, on which he stands, overruling all the affairs of it according to his will. If God has so bright a throne, so large a footstool, *where then is the house they can build unto God*, that can be the residence of his glory, or, *where is the place of his rest?* What satisfaction can the Eternal Mind take in a house made with men's hands? What occasion has he, as we have, for a house to repose himself in, who *faints not, neither is weary*, who neither slumbers nor sleeps? Or, if he had occasion, he *would not tell us*, (Ps. 1. 12.) *for all these things hath his hand made*, heaven and all its courts, earth and all its borders, and all the hosts of both. All these things have been, have had their beginning, by the power of God, who was happy from eternity before they were, and therefore could not be benefited by them. All these things are; so some read it; they still continue, upheld by the same power that made them; so that *our goodness extends not to him*. If he would have had a house for himself to dwell in, he would have made one himself when he made the world; and if he had made one, it would have continued to this day, as other creatures do, according to his ordinance: so that he had no need of a temple made with hands.

2. That he would not need it, so as he would a humble, penitent, gracious heart. He has a heaven and earth of his own making, and a temple of man's making; but he overlooks them all, that he may look with favour to him that is poor in spirit, humble and serious, self-abasing and self-denying, whose heart is truly contrite for sin, penitent for it, in pain to get it pardoned, and that *trembles at God's word*, not as Felix did, with a transient qualm that was over when the sermon was done, but with an habitual awe of God's majesty and purity, and an habitual dread of his justice and wrath; such a heart is a living temple for God, he dwells there, and it is the place of his rest; it is like heaven and earth, his throne and his footstool.

II. Sacrifices are slighted when they come from *ungracious hands*; the sacrifices of the wicked is not only unacceptable, but it is an *abomination to the Lord*; (Prov. xv. 8.) this is largely shown here, v. 3, 4. Observe,

1. How detestable their sacrifices were to God. The carnal Jews, after their return out of captivity, though they relapsed not to idolatry, grew very careless and loose in the service of God; they brought the *torn, and the lame, and the sick*, for sacrifice, (Mal. i. 8, 13.) and this made their services abominable to God; they had no regard to their sacrifices, and therefore how could they think God

should have any regard to them? The unbelieving Jews, after the gospel was preached, and in it notice given of the offering up of the great Sacrifice, which put an end to all the ceremonial services, continued to offer sacrifices, as if the law of Moses had been still in force, and could have *made the comers thereunto perfect*: this was an abomination; *He that kills an ox* for his own table, is welcome to do it; but he that now kills it, and thus kills it for God's altar, *is as if he slew a man*; it is as great an offence to God as murder itself; he that does it, does in effect set aside Christ's sacrifice, *treads under foot the blood of the covenant*, and makes himself accessory to the guilt of the *body and blood of the Lord*; setting up what Christ died to abolish. He that *sacrifices a lamb*, if it be a corrupt thing, and not the male in his flock, the best he has, if he think to put God off with any thing, he affronts him, instead of pleasing him; it is as if he *cut off a dog's neck*; a creature in the eye of the law so vile, that whereas an ass might be redeemed, the price of a dog was never to be brought into the treasury; Deut. xxiii. 18. He that *offers an oblation*, a meat-offering, or drink-offering, is as if he thought to make atonement with swine's blood; a creature that must not be eaten or touched, the *broth of it* was abominable, (*ch. lxxv. 4.*) much more the blood of it. He that *burns incense to God*, and so puts contempt upon the incense of Christ's intercession, is as if he *blessed an idol*; it was as great an affront to God as if they had paid their devotions to a false god. Hypocrisy and profaneness are as provoking as idolatry.

2. What their wickedness was, which made their sacrifices thus detestable; it is *because they have chosen their own ways*, the ways of their own wicked hearts, and not only their hands do, but *their soul delights in, their abominations*; they were vicious and immoral in their conversations, chose the way of sin rather than the way of God's commandments, and took pleasure in that which was provoking to God; this made their sacrifices so offensive to God, *ch. i. 11.—15.* Those that pretend to honour God by a profession of religion, and yet live wicked lives, put an affront upon him, as if he were the Patron of sin. And that which was an aggravation of their wickedness, was, that they persisted in it, notwithstanding the frequent calls given them to repent and reform; they turned a deaf ear to all the warnings of divine justice and all the offers of divine grace; *When I called, none did answer*, as before, *ch. lxxv. 12.* And the same follows here that did there; *They did evil before mine eyes.* Being deaf to what he said, they cared not what he saw, but *chose that in which they knew he delighted not.* How could they expect to please him in their devotions, who took no care to please him in their conversations, but, on the contrary, designed to provoke him?

3. The doom passed upon them for this; They *chose their own ways*, therefore, says God, I also will *choose their delusions*; *They have made their choice*, (as Mr. Gataker paraphrases it,) *and now I will make mine*; they have taken what course they pleased with me, and I will take what course I please with them. I will choose their illusions, or mockeries; so some. As they have mocked God, and dishonoured him by their wickedness, so God will give them up to their enemies, to be trampled upon and insulted by them. Or, They shall be deceived by those vain confidences with which they have deceived themselves. God will make their sin their punishment; they shall be beaten with their own rod, and hurried into ruin by their own delusions. God will *bring their fears upon them*, will bring upon them that which shall be a terror to them, that which they themselves have been afraid of, and thought to escape by sinful shifts. Unbelieving

hearts, and unpurified, unpacified consciences, need no more to make them miserable, than to have *their own fears brought* upon them.

5. Hear the word of the LORD; ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. 6. A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompense to his enemies. 7. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. 8. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. 9. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God. 10. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: 11. That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations, that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. 12. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. 13. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. 14. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb; and the hand of the LORD shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation towards his enemies.

The prophet, having denounced God's judgments against an hypocritical nation, that made a jest of God's word, and would not answer him when he called to them, here turns his speech to those that trembled at his word, to comfort and encourage them; they shall not be involved in the judgments that are coming upon their unbelieving nation. Ministers must distinguish thus, that, when they speak terror to the wicked, they may not *make the hearts of the righteous sad.* *Bone Christiane, hoc nihil ad te—Good Christian, this is nothing to thee.* The prophet having assured those that trembled at God's word, of a gracious look from him, (*v. 2.*) here brings them a gracious message from him. The word of God has comforts in store for those that by true humiliation for sin are prepared to receive them. There were those (*v. 4.*) who, when God spake, would not hear; but if some will not, others will. If the heart tremble at the word, the ear will be open to it. Now what is here said to them?

I. Let them know that God will plead their just but injured cause against their persecutors; (*v. 5.*) *Your brethren that hated you, said, Let the Lord be glorified. But he shall appear to your joy.* This perhaps might have reference to the case of some of the Jews at their return out of captivity; but no-



thing like it appears in the history, and therefore it is rather to be referred to the first preachers and professors of the gospel among the Jews, to whose case it is very applicable. Observe, 1. How the faithful servants of God were persecuted; *their brethren hated them*. The apostles were Jews by birth, and yet even in the cities of the Gentiles, the Jews they met with there were their most bitter and implacable enemies, and *stirred up the Gentiles* against them. The spouse complains, (Cant. i. 6.) that her *mother's children were angry with her*. Pilate upbraided our Lord Jesus with this, *Thine own nation have delivered thee unto me*, John xviii. 35. Their brethren, who should have loved them, and encouraged them, for their work's sake, hated them, and cast them out of their synagogues, excommunicated them, as if they had been the greatest blemishes, who really were the greatest blessings of their church and nation. This was a fruit of the old enmity in the *seed of the serpent* against the *seed of the woman*. They that hated Christ hated his disciples, because they supported his kingdom and interest; (John xv. 18.) and they *cast them out for his name's sake*, because they were called by his name, and called upon his name, and laid out themselves to advance his name. Note, It is no new thing for church-censures to be misapplied, and for her artillery, that was intended for her defence, to be turned against her best friends, by the treachery of her governors. And they that did this said, *Let the Lord be glorified*; they pretended conscience, and a zeal for the honour of God and the church in it, and did it with all the formalities of devotion. Our Saviour explains this, and seems to have reference to it, John xvi. 2. *They shall put you out of their synagogues, and whosoever kills you will think that he does God service. In nomine Domini incipit omne malum*—In the name of the Lord commences evil of every kind. Or, we may understand it as spoken in defiance of God. "You say God will be glorified in your deliverance, let him be glorified then; let him make speed, and hasten his work; (ch. v. 19.) let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." Some take it to be the language of the profane Jews in captivity, bantering their brethren that hoped for deliverance, and ridiculing the expectations they often comforted themselves with, that God would shortly be glorified in it. They thus did what they could to *shame the counsel of the poor*, Ps. xiv. 6. 2. How they were encouraged under these persecutions; "Let your faith and patience hold out yet a little while; your enemies hate you and oppress you, your brethren hate you and cast you out, but your Father in heaven loves you, and will appear for you when no one else will or dare. His providence shall order things so as shall be for comfort to you, he shall appear for your joy, and for the confusion of those that abuse you and trample on you; they shall be ashamed of their enmity to you." This was fulfilled, when, upon the signals given of Jerusalem's approaching ruin, the *Jews' hearts failed them for fear*; but the disciples of Christ, whom they had hated and persecuted, *lifted up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption drew nigh*, Luke xxi. 26, 28. Though God seem to hide himself, he will in due time show himself.

II. Let them know that God's appearances for them will be such as will make a great noise in the world; (v. 6.) There shall be a *voice of noise from the city, from the temple*. Some make it the joyful and triumphant voice of the church's friends; others the frightful, lamenting voice of her enemies, surprised in the city, and fleeing in vain to the temple for shelter. These voices do but echo to the *voice of the Lord*, who is now rendering a *recompense to his enemies*; and those that will not hear him speaking this terror, shall hear them returning the alarms

of it in doleful shrieks. We may well think what a confused noise there was in the city and temple, when Jerusalem, after a long siege, was at last taken by the Romans. Some think this prophecy was fulfilled in the prodigies that went before that destruction of Jerusalem, related by Josephus in his History of the wars of the Jews; (*lib. 7. cap. 31.*) that the temple doors flew open suddenly of their own accord, and the priests heard a noise of motion or shifting in the most holy place, and presently a voice, saying, *Let us depart hence*. And some time after, one Jesus Bar-Annas went up and down the city, at the feast of tabernacles, continually crying, *A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds; a voice against Jerusalem, and the temple; a voice against all this people*.

III. Let them know that God will set up a church for himself in the world, which shall be abundantly replenished in a little time; (v. 7.) *Before she travailed she brought forth*. This is to be applied in the type to the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, which was brought about very easily and silently, without any pain or struggle, such as was when they were brought out of Egypt: that was done by *might and power*, (Deut. iv. 34.) but this by the *Spirit of the Lord of hosts*, Zech. iv. 6. The man-child of the deliverance is *rejoiced in*, and yet the mother was never in labour for it; *before her pain came she was delivered*. This is altogether surprising, uncommon, and without precedent, unless in the story which the Egyptian midwives told of the Hebrew women, (Exod. i. 19.) that they were lively, and were delivered ere the midwives came in unto them. But shall the earth be made to bring forth her fruits in one day? No, it is the work of some weeks in the spring to *renew the face of the earth*, and cover it with its products. Some read it to the same purport with the next clause, *Shall a land be brought forth in one day, or shall a nation be born at once?* Is it to be imagined that a woman at one birth should bring children sufficient to people a country, and that they should in an instant grow up to maturity? No; something like this was done in the creation; but God has since rested from all such works, and leaves second causes to produce their effects gradually. *Nihil facit per saltum—He does nothing abruptly*. Yet in this case, as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth. Cyrus's proclamation was no sooner issued out, than the captives were formed into a body, and were ready to make the best of their way to their own land. And the reason is given, (v. 9.) because it is the *Lord's doing*; he undertakes it, whose work is perfect. If he bring to the birth in preparing his people for deliverance, he will cause to bring forth in the accomplishment of the deliverance. When every thing is ripe and ready for their release, and the number of their months is accomplished, so that the children are brought to the birth, shall not I then give strength to bring forth, but leave mother and babe to perish together in the most miserable case? How will this agree with the divine pity? Shall I begin a work, and not go through with it? How will that agree with the divine power and perfection? *Am I he that causes to bring forth*, (so the following clause may be read,) *and shall I restrain her?* Does God cause mankind, and all the species of living creatures, to propagate, and replenish the earth, and will he restrain Zion? Will he not make her fruitful in a blessed offspring to replenish the church? Or, *Am I he that beget, and should I restrain from bringing forth?* Did God beget the deliverance in his purpose and promise, and will he not bring it forth in the accomplishment and performance of it? But this was a figure of the setting up of the Christian church in the world, and the replenishing of that

family with children, which was to be named from Jesus Christ. When the Spirit was poured out, and the gospel went forth from Zion, multitudes were converted in a little time, and with little pains, compared with the vast product. The apostles, even *before they travailed*, brought forth, and the children born to Christ were so numerous, and so suddenly and easily produced, that they were rather like the dew from the morning's womb than like the son from the mother's womb, Ps. cx. 3. The success of the gospel was astonishing; that light, like the morning, strangely diffused itself till it took hold even of *the ends of the earth*. Cities and nations were born at once to Christ. The same day that the Spirit was poured out, there were three thousand souls added to the church. And when this glorious work was once begun, it was carried on wonderfully, beyond what could be imagined; *so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed*. He that brought to the birth in conviction of sin, caused to bring forth in a thorough conversion to God.

IV. Let them know that their present sorrows shall shortly be turned into abundant joys, v. 10, 11. Observe,

1. How the church's friends are described; they are such as love her, and mourn with her and for her. Note, All that love God love Jerusalem: they love the church of God, and lay its interest very near their heart. They admire the beauty of the church, take pleasure in communion with it, and heartily espouse its cause. And they that have a sincere affection for the church, have a cordial sympathy with her in all the cares and sorrows of her militant state. They mourn for her, all her grievances are their griefs; if Jerusalem be in distress, their harps are hung on the willow-trees.

2. How they are encouraged: *Rejoice with her*, and again and again, *I say, Rejoice*. This intimates that Jerusalem shall have cause to rejoice; the days of her mourning shall be at an end, and she shall be comforted according to the time that she has been afflicted. It is the will of God, that all her friends should join with her in her joys, for they shall share with her in those blessings that will be the matter of her joy. *If we suffer with Christ*, and sorrow with his church, *we shall reign with him*, and rejoice with her. We are here called, (1.) To bear our part in the church's praises: "Come, rejoice with her, rejoice for joy with her, rejoice greatly, rejoice and know why you rejoice; rejoice on the days appointed for public thanksgiving. You that mourned for her in her sorrows, cannot but from the same principles rejoice with her in her joy." (2.) To take our part in the church's comforts. We must suck and be satisfied with the breasts of our consolations; the word of God, the covenant of grace, especially the promises of that covenant, the ordinances of God, and all the opportunities of attending on him, and conversing with him, are the breasts, which the church calls and counts the breasts of her consolations, where her comforts are laid up, and whence by faith and prayer they are drawn; with her therefore we must suck from these breasts, by an application of the promises of God to ourselves, and a diligent attendance on his ordinances; and with the consolations which are drawn hence we must be satisfied, and not be dissatisfied, though we have ever so little of earthly comforts. It is the glory of the church, that she has the Lord for her God, that to her pertain the adoption and service of God; with the abundance of this glory we must be delighted. We must take more pleasure in our relation to God, and communion with him, than in all the delights of the sons and daughters of men. Whatever is the glory of the church, must be our glory and joy, particularly her purity, unity, and increase.

V. Let them know that he who gives them this call to rejoice, will give them cause to do so, and hearts to do so, v. 12.—14.

1. He will give them cause to do so. For, (1.) They shall enjoy a long, uninterrupted course of prosperity; *I will extend*, or am extending, *peace to her*, all good to her, like a river that runs in a constant stream, still increasing till it be swallowed up in the ocean. The gospel brings with it wherever it is received in its power, such peace as this, which shall go on like a river, supplying souls with all good, and making them fruitful, as a river does the lands it passes through, such a river of peace as the springs of the world's comforts cannot send forth, and the dams of the world's troubles cannot stop or drive back, or its sands rack up; such a river of peace as will carry us to the ocean of boundless and endless bliss. (2.) There shall be large and advantageous additions made to them; *The glory of the Gentiles shall come to them like a flowing stream*. Gentile converts shall come pouring into the church, and swell the river of her peace and prosperity; for they shall bring their glory with them; their wealth and honour, their power and interest shall all be devoted to the service of God, and employed for the good of the church; "Then shall you suck from the breasts of her consolations; when you see such crowding for a share in those comforts, you shall be the more solicitous and the more vigorous to secure your share; not for fear of having the less for others' coming in to partake of Christ," (there is no danger of that, he has enough for all, and enough for each,) "but their zeal shall provoke you to a holy jealousy." It is well when it does so, Rom. xi. 14. 2 Cor. ix. 2. (3.) God shall be glorified in all; and that ought to be more the matter of our joy than any thing else; (v. 14.) *The hand of the Lord shall be known toward his servants*, the protecting, supporting hand of his almighty power, the supplying, enriching hand of his inexhaustible goodness, the benefit which his servants have by both these, shall be known to his glory as well as theirs. And to make this the more illustrious, he will at the same time make known his indignation toward his enemies. God's mercy and justice shall be both manifested and for ever magnified.

2. God will not only give them cause to rejoice, but will speak comfort to them, will speak it to their hearts; and it is he only that can do that, and make it fasten there. See what he will do for the comfort of all the sons of Zion. (1.) Their country shall be their tender nurse; Ye shall be carried on her sides, under her arms, as little children are, and shall be dandled upon her knees, as darlings are, especially when they are weary and out of humour, and must be got to sleep. Those that are joined to the church, must be treated thus affectionately; the Great Shepherd gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom, and so must the under-shepherds, that they may not be discouraged. Proselytes should be favourites. (2.) God will himself be their powerful Comforter; as one whom his mother comforts, when he is sick or sore, or upon any account in sorrow, so will I comfort you; not only with the rational arguments which a prudent father uses, but with the tender affections and compassions of a loving mother, that bemoans her afflicted child when it has fallen and hurt itself, that she may quiet it and make it easy, or endeavours to pacify it after she has chidden it and fallen out with it: (Jer. xxxi. 20.) *Since I spake against him, my bowels are troubled for him*; he is a dear son, he is a pleasant child. Thus the mother comforts. Thus you shall be comforted in Jerusalem, in the favours bestowed on the church, which you shall partake of, and in the thanksgivings offered by the church, which you shall concur with. (3.) They shall feel the

blessed efficacy of this comfort in their own souls; (v. 13.) *When you see this*, what a happy state the church is restored to, not only your tongues and your countenances, but *your hearts shall rejoice*. This was fulfilled in the wonderful satisfaction which Christ's disciples had in the success of their ministry. Christ, with an eye to that, tells them, (John xvi. 22.) *Your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you*. Then *your bones*, that were dried and withered, (the marrow of them quite exhausted,) shall recover a youthful strength and vigour, and *shall flourish like an herb*. Divine comforts reach the inward man, *they are marrow* and moistening to the bones, Prov. iii. 8. The bones are the strength of the body; those shall be made to flourish with these comforts; *The joy of the Lord will be your strength*, Neh. viii. 10.

15. For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. 16. For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many. 17. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens, behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the LORD. 18. For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory. 19. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. 20. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD, out of all nations, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. 21. And I will also take of them for priests, and for Levites, saith the LORD. 22. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. 23. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. 24. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

These verses, like the pillar of cloud and fire, have a dark side towards the enemies of God's kingdom, and all that are rebels against his crown, and a bright

side towards his faithful, loyal subjects. Probably, it refers to the Jews in captivity in Babylon, of whom some are said to have been sent thither for their hurt; and those are they with whom God here threatens to proceed in his controversy, who hated to be reformed, and therefore should be ruined by the calamity, Jer. xxiv. 9. Others were sent thither for their good, and they should have the trouble sanctified to them, should in due time get well through it, and see many a good day after it. Divers of the expressions here used are accommodated to that glorious dispensation; but doubtless it looks further, to the judgment for which Christ did come once, and will come again, into this world; and to the distinction which his word in both makes *between the precious and the vile*.

I. Christ will appear to the confusion and terror of all those that stand it out against him; sometimes in temporal judgments. The Jews that persisted in infidelity were cut off *by fire*, and *by his sword*; the ruin was very extensive, *the Lord then pleaded with all flesh*; and it being his sword with which they are cut off, they are called *his slain*, sacrificed to his justice: and they *shall be many*. In the great day, *the wrath of God will be his fire and sword*, with which he will cut off and consume all the impenitent; and his word, when it takes hold of sinners' consciences, *burns like fire*, and is sharper *than any two-edged sword*. Idolaters will especially be contended with in the day of wrath, v. 17. Perhaps some of those who returned out of Babylon, retained such instances of idolatry and superstition as are here mentioned; had their *idols in their gardens*, (not daring to set them up publicly in the high places,) and there *purified themselves*, as the worshippers of the true God used to do, when they went about their idolatrous rites, *one after another*, or, as we read it, *behind one tree in the midst*; behind *Ahad*, or *Ehad*, some idol that they worshipped by that name; and in honour of which they *ate swine's flesh*, which was expressly forbidden by the law of God; and other abominations, as the mouse, or some other like animal. But it may refer to all those judgments which the wrath of God, according to the word of God, will bring upon provoking sinners, that live in contempt of God, and are devoted to the world and the flesh—they shall be *consumed together*. From the happiness of heaven we find expressly excluded *all idolaters, and whosoever worketh abomination*, Rev. xxi. 27.—xxii. 15. In the day of vengeance, secret wickedness will be brought to light, and brought to the account; for, (v. 18.) *I know their works, and their thoughts*; God knows both what men do, and from what principle, and with what design they do it; and therefore is fit to judge the world, because he can *judge the secrets of men*, Rom. ii. 16.

II. He will appear to the comfort and joy of all that are faithful to him in the setting up of his kingdom in this world, the kingdom of grace, the earnest and first-fruits of the kingdom of glory. The time shall come that he will *gather all nations and tongues to himself*, that they might come and see his glory as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, v. 18. This was fulfilled when all nations were to be disciplined, and the gift of tongues bestowed in order thereunto. The church had hitherto been confined to one nation, and in one tongue only God was worshipped; but in the days of the Messiah the partition-wall shall be taken down, and those that had been strangers to God shall be brought acquainted with him, and shall see his glory in the gospel, as the Jews had seen it in the sanctuary. As to this, it is here promised,

1. That some of the Jewish nation should, by the grace of God, be distinguished from the rest, and marked for salvation: I will not only set up a *gathering ensign* among them, to which the Gentiles shall

scek, (as is promised, *ch. xi. 12.*) but there shall be those among them on whom I will set a *differentiating sign*; for so the word signifies. Though they are a corrupt, degenerate nation, yet God will set apart a remnant of them, that shall be devoted to him, and employed for him, and a mark shall be set upon them, with such certainty will God own them, *Ezek. ix. 4.* The *servants of God* shall be *sealed in their foreheads*, *Rev. vii. 3.* The Lord knows them that are his; Christ's sheep are marked.

2. That those who are themselves distinguished thus by the grace of God, shall be commissioned to invite others to come and take the benefit of that grace: those that escape the power of those prejudices by which the generality of that nation is kept in unbelief, they shall be *sent unto the nations*, to carry the gospel among them, and preach it to every creature. Note, Those who themselves have escaped the wrath to come, should do all they can to snatch others also as brands out of the burning. God chooses to send those on his errands that can deliver their message feelingly and experimentally, and warn people of their danger by sin, as those who have themselves narrowly escaped the danger. (1.) They shall be sent *unto the nations*, divers of which are here named, Tarshish, and Pul, and Lud, &c. It is uncertain, nor are interpreters agreed, what couriers are here intended; Tarshish signifies in general the sea, yet some take it for Tarsus in Cilicia; Pul is mentioned sometimes as the name of one of the kings of Assyria, perhaps some part of that country might likewise bear that name; Lud is supposed to be Lydia, a warlike nation, famed for archers; the Lydians are said to *handle and bend the bow*, *Jer. xli. 9.* Tabul, some think, is Italy or Spain; and Javan most agree to be Greece, the Iones; and the *Isles of the Gentiles*, that were peopled by the posterity of Japhet, (*Gen. x. 5.*) probably, are here meant by the *isles afar off*, that have *not heard my name, neither have seen my glory*. In Judah only God was known, and there only his name was great for many ages; other countries sat in darkness, heard not the joyful sound, saw not the joyful light. This deplorable state of theirs seems to be spoken of here with compassion; for it is pity that any of the children of men should be at such a distance from their Maker as not to *hear his name and see his glory*. In consideration of this, (2.) Those that are sent to the nations shall go upon God's errand, to *declare his glory among the Gentiles*; the Jews that shall be dispersed among the nations shall declare the glory of God's providence concerning their nation all along, by which many shall be invited to join with them, as also by the appearances of God's glory among them in his ordinances; some out of all languages of the nations shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, entreating him to take notice of them, to admit them into his company, and to stay a little while for them, till they are ready, for *we will go with you, having heard that God is with you*, *Zech. viii. 23.* Thus the glory of God was in part declared among the Gentiles; but more clearly and fully by the apostles and preachers of the gospel, who were sent into all the world, even to the isles afar off, to publish the glorious gospel of the blessed God. They *went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them*, *Mark xvi. 20.*

3. That many converts shall hereby be made, *v. 20.* They shall bring all your brethren (for proselytes ought to be owned and embraced as brethren) for an offering unto the Lord. God's glory shall not be in vain declared to them, but by it they shall be both invited and directed to join themselves to the Lord. They that are sent to them shall succeed so well in their negotiation, that thereupon there shall be as great a flocking to Jerusalem, as used to be at

the time of a solemn feast, when all the males from all parts of the country were to attend there, and not to appear empty. Observe, (1.) The conveniences that they shall be furnished with for their coming; some shall come *upon horses*, because they came from far, and the journey was too long to travel on foot, as the Jews usually did to their feasts; persons of quality shall come *in chariots*, and the aged and sickly, and little children, shall be brought *in litters* or covered wagons; and the young men *on mules and swift beasts*. This intimates their zeal and forwardness to come; they shall spare no trouble or charge to get to Jerusalem; those that cannot ride on horseback shall come in litters; and in such haste shall they be, and so impatient of delay, that these that can shall ride upon mules and swift beasts. These expressions are figurative, and these various means of conveyance are heaped up to intimate (says the learned Mr. Gataker) the plentiful affording of all gracious helps requisite for the bringing of God's elect home to Christ. All shall be welcome, and nothing shall be wanting for their assistance and encouragement. (2.) The character under which they shall be brought; they shall come, not as formerly they used to come to Jerusalem, to be offerers, but to be themselves *an offering unto the Lord*, which must be understood spiritually, of their being presented to God as *living sacrifices*, *Rom. xii. 1.* The apostle explains this, and perhaps refers to it, *Rom. xv. 16.* where he speaks of his *ministering the gospel to the Gentiles*, that the *offering up, or sacrificing of the Gentiles might be acceptable*. They shall offer themselves, and these who are the instruments of their conversion shall offer them, as the spoils which they have taken for Christ, and which are devoted to his service and honour. They shall be brought as the *children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel*, with great care, that they be holy, purified from sin, and sanctified to God. It is said of the converted Gentiles, (*Acts xv. 9.*) that *their hearts were purified by faith*. Whatever was brought to God was brought *in a clean vessel*, a vessel appropriated to religious uses. God will be served and honoured in the way that he has appointed, in the ordinances of his own institution, which are the proper vehicles for these spiritual offerings. When the soul is offered up to God, the body must be a clean vessel for it, possessed in *sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness*; (*1 Thess. iv. 4, 5.*) and converts to Christ are not only *purged from an evil conscience*, but have their *bodies also washed with pure water*, *Heb. x. 22.*

Now this may refer, [1.] To the Jews, devout men, and proselytes out of every nation under heaven, that flocked together to Jerusalem, expecting the kingdom of the Messiah to appear, *Acts ii. 5, 6, 10.* They came from all parts to the holy mountain of Jerusalem as an offering to the Lord, and there many of them were brought to the faith of Christ by the gift of tongues poured out on the apostles. Methinks, there is some correspondence between that history and this prophecy. The eunuch some time after came to worship at Jerusalem in his chariot, and took home with him the knowledge of Christ and his holy religion. [2.] To the Gentiles, some of all nations, that should be converted to Christ, and so added to the church, which, though a spiritual accession, is often in prophecy represented by a local motion. The apostle says of all true Christians, that they are *come to mount Zion, and the heavenly Jerusalem*; (*Heb. xii. 22.*) which passage explains this, and shows that the meaning of all this parade is only that they shall be brought into the church by the grace of God, and in the use of the means of that grace, as carefully, safely, and comfortably, as if they were carried in chariots and

hitters. Thus God shall *persuade Japhet*, and he shall *dwell in the tents of Shem*, Gen. ix. 27.

4. That a gospel-ministry shall be set up in the church, it being thus enlarged by the addition of such a multitude of members to it; (v. 21.) *I will take of them*, of the proselytes, of the Gentile converts, *for priests and for Levites*, to minister in holy things, and to preside in their religious assemblies, which is very necessary for doctrine, worship, and discipline. Hitherto the priests and Levites were all taken from among the Jews, and were all of one tribe; but in gospel-times God will take of the converted Gentiles to minister to him in holy things, to teach the people, to bless them in the name of the Lord, to be the stewards of the mysteries of God as the priests and Levites were under the law, to be pastors and teachers, or bishops, *to give themselves to the word and prayer*; and deacons *to serve tables*, and, as the Levites, to take care of the *outward business of the house of God*, Phil. i. 1. Acts vi. 2.—4. The apostles were all Jews, and so were the seventy disciples; the great apostle of the Gentiles was himself a *Hebrew of the Hebrews*; but when churches were planted among the Gentiles, they had ministers settled, who were of *themselves elders in every church*, (Acts xiv. 23. Tit. i. 5.) which made the ministry to spread the more easily, and to be the more familiar; and if not the more venerable, yet the more acceptable; gospel-grace, it might be hoped, would cure people of those corruptions which kept a prophet from having *honour in his own country*. God says, *I will take, not all of them*, though they are all in a spiritual sense made to our God kings and priests, but *of them*, some of them. It is God's work originally to choose ministers by qualifying them for, and inclining them to, the service, as well as to make ministers by giving them their commission. I will take them, I will admit them, though Gentiles, and will accept of them and their ministrations. This is a great honour and advantage to the Gentile church, as it was to the Jewish church, that God *raised up of their sons for prophets*, and *their young men for Nazarites*, Amos ii. 11.

5. That the church and ministry, being thus settled, shall continue and be kept up in a succession from one generation to another, v. 22. The change that will be made by the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah, is here described to be, (1.) A very great and universal change; it shall be a new world, *the new heavens, and the new earth*, promised before, ch. lxx. 17. *Old things are passed away*, behold, *all things are become new*, (2 Cor. v. 17.) the old covenant of peculiarity is set aside, and a new covenant, a covenant of grace, established, Heb. viii. 13. We are now to serve in *newness of the spirit*, and *not in the oldness of the letter*, Rom. vii. 6. New commandments are given relating both to heaven and earth, and new promises relating to both, and both together make a New Testament; so that they are new heavens and new earth, that God will create, and these a preparative for the new heavens and new earth designed at the end of time, 2 Pet. iii. 13. (2.) A change of God's own making: he will create the new heavens and the new earth. The change was made by him that had authority to make new ordinances, as well as power to make new worlds. (3.) It will be an abiding, lasting change; a change never to be changed; a new world that will be always new, and never wax old, as that does, which is ready to vanish away. *It shall remain before me unalterable*; for the gospel dispensation is to continue to the end of time, and not to be succeeded by any other. The kingdom of Christ is a *kingdom that cannot be moved*; the laws and privileges of it are *things that cannot be shaken*, but shall *for ever remain*, Heb. xii. 27, 28. It shall *therefore remain*, because it is before God; it is

under his eye, and care, and special protection. (4.) It will be maintained in a seed that shall serve Christ; *Your seed*, and in them, *your name, shall remain*—a seed of ministers, a seed of Christians; as one generation of both passes away, another generation shall come, and thus the name of Christ with that of Christians, shall continue on earth while the earth remains, and his throne as the days of heaven. The gates of hell, though they fight against the church, shall not *prevail*, nor *wear out the saints of the Most High*.

6. That the public worship of God in religious assemblies shall be carefully and constantly attended upon by all that are thus brought *as an offering to the Lord*, v. 23. This is described in expressions suited to the Old Testament dispensation, to show that though the ceremonial law should be abolished, and the temple-services should come to an end, yet God should be still as regularly, constantly, and acceptably worshipped as ever. Heretofore Jews only went up to appear before God, and they were bound to attend only three times a year, and the males only; but now all flesh, Gentiles as well as Jews, women as well as men, shall *come and worship before God* in his presence, though not in his temple at Jerusalem, but in religious assemblies dispersed all the world over, which shall be to them as the tabernacle of meeting was to the Jews. God will in them record his name, and though but two or three come together, he will be among them, will meet them, and bless them. And they shall have the benefit of these holy convocations frequently, every new moon, and every sabbath, not, as formerly, at the three annual feasts only. There is no necessity of one certain place, as the temple was of old. Christ is our Temple, in whom by faith all believers meet, and now that the church is so far extended, it is impossible that all should meet at one place; but it is fit that there should be a certain time appointed, that the service may be done certainly and frequently, and a token thereby given of the spiritual communion which all Christian assemblies have with each other, by faith, hope, and holy love. The *new moons and the sabbaths* are mentioned, because, under the law, though the yearly feasts were to be celebrated at Jerusalem, yet the new moons and the sabbaths were religiously observed all the country over, in the *schools of the prophets* first, and afterward in the *synagogues*, (2 Kings iv. 23. Amos viii. 5. Acts xv. 21.) according to the model of which Christian assemblies seem to be performed. Where the Lord's day is weekly sanctified, and the Lord's Supper monthly celebrated, and both duly attended on, there this promise is fulfilled, there the Christian new moons and sabbaths are observed. See here, that God is to be worshipped in solemn assemblies, that it is the duty of all, as they have opportunity, to wait upon God in those assemblies; *all flesh must come*; though flesh, weak, corrupt, and sinful, let them come that the flesh may be mortified. In worshipping God, we present ourselves before him, and are in a special manner in his presence. For doing this, there ought to be stated times, and are so; and we must see that it is our interest as well as our duty constantly and conscientiously to observe these times.

7. That their thankful sense of God's distinguishing favour to them, should be very much increased by the consideration of the fearful doom and destruction of those that persist and perish in their infidelity and impiety, v. 24. Those that have been worshipping the Lord of hosts, and rejoicing before him in the goodness of his house, shall, in order to affect themselves the more with their own happiness, take a view of the misery of the wicked. Observe, (1.) Who they are, whose misery is here described; they are men that have transgressed

against God, not only broken his laws, but broken covenant with him, and thought themselves able to contend with him. It may be meant especially of the unbelieving Jews that rejected the gospel of Christ. (2.) What their misery is; it is here represented by the frightful spectacle of a field of battle, covered with the *carcases* of the slain, that lie rotting above ground, full of *worms* crawling about them, and feeding on them; and if you go to burn them, they are so scattered, and it is such a noisome piece of work to get them together, that it would be endless, and the *fire would never be quenched*; so that they are an *abhorring to all flesh*, nobody cares to come near them. Now this is sometimes accomplished in temporal judgments, and perhaps never nearer the letter than in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, in which destruction it is computed that above two millions, first and last, were cut off by the sword, beside what perished by famine and pestilence. It may refer likewise to the spiritual judgments that came upon the unbelieving Jews, which St. Paul looks upon, and shows us, Rom. xi. 8, &c. They became dead in sins, twice dead; the church of the Jews was a *carcase* of a church, all its members were putrid carcases, *their worm died not*,

their own consciences made them continually uneasy; and the fire of their rage against the gospel was not quenched, which was their punishment as well as their sin; and they became, more than ever any nation under the sun, *an abhorring to all flesh*. But our Saviour applies it to the everlasting misery and torment of impenitent sinners in the future state, where their *worm dies not*, and their *fire is not quenched*; (Mark ix. 44.) for the soul, whose conscience is its constant tormentor, is immortal, and the God, whose wrath is its constant terror, is eternal. (3.) What notice shall be taken of it; they that worship God shall *go forth, and look upon them*, to affect their own hearts with the love of their Redeemer, when they see what misery they are redeemed from. As it will aggravate the miseries of the damned, to see others in the kingdom of heaven, and *themselves thrust out*, (Luke xiii. 28.) so it will illustrate the joys and glories of the blessed, to see what becomes of them that died in their transgression, and it will elevate their praises to think that they were themselves as brands plucked out of that burning. To the honour of that free grace which thus distinguished them, let the redeemed of the Lord with all humility, and not without a holy trembling, sing their triumphant songs.