

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

WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET
JEREMIAH.

The Prophecies of the Old Testament, as the Epistles of the New, are placed rather according to their bulk than their seniority; the longest first, not the eldest. There were divers prophets, and writing ones, that were contemporaries with Isaiah, as Micah; or a little before him, as Hosea, and Joel, and Amos, or soon after him, as Habakkuk and Nahum are supposed to be: and yet the prophecy of Jeremiah, who began many years after Isaiah had finished, is placed next to his, because there is so much in it: where we meet with most of God's word, there let the preference be given; and yet those of lesser gifts are not to be despised or excluded. Nothing now occurs to be observed further concerning prophecy in general; but concerning this prophet Jeremiah we may observe,

I. That he was betimes a prophet; he began young, and therefore could say it from his own experience, that it is good for a man to *bear the yoke in his youth*, the yoke both of service and of affliction, Lam. iii. 27. Jerome observes, that Isaiah, who had more years over his head, had his tongue touched with a coal of fire, to purge away his iniquity; (*ch. vi. 7.*) but that when God touched Jeremiah's mouth, who was yet but young, nothing was said of the purging of his iniquity, (*ch. i. 9.*) because, by reason of his tender years, he had not so much sin to answer for.

II. That he continued long a prophet; some reckon fifty years, others above forty. He began in the 13th year of Josiah, when things went well under that good king, but he continued through all the wicked reigns that followed; for when we set out for the service of God, though the wind may be fair and favourable, we know not how soon it may turn and be tempestuous.

III. That he was a *reproving* prophet, was sent in God's name to tell Jacob of their sins, and to warn them of the judgments of God that were coming upon them; and the critics observe, that therefore his style and manner of speaking is more plain and rough, and less polite, than that of Isaiah and some other of the prophets. Those that are sent to discover sin, ought to lay aside the enticing words of man's wisdom. Plain dealing is best when we are dealing with sinners, to bring them to repentance.

IV. That he was a *weeping* prophet; so he is commonly called, not only because he penned the Lamentations, but because he was all along a mournful spectator of the sins of his people, and of the desolating judgments that were coming upon them. And for this reason, perhaps, those who imagined our Saviour to be one of the prophets, thought him of any of them to be most like to Jeremiah, (*Matth. xvi. 14.*) because he was a *man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*.

V. That he was a *suffering* prophet; he was persecuted by his own people more than any of them, as we shall find in the story of this book; for he lived and preached just before the Jews' destruction by the Chaldeans, when their character seems to have been the same as it was just before their destruction by the Romans, when they *killed the Lord Jesus, and persecuted his disciples, pleased not God, and were contrary to all men, for wrath was come upon them to the uttermost*, 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. The last account we have of him, in his history, is, that the remaining Jews forced him to go down with them into Egypt; whereas the current tradition is, among Jews and Christians, that he suffered martyrdom. Hottinger, out of Elmakin, an Arabic historian, relates, that he, continuing to prophesy in Egypt against the Egyptians and other nations, was stoned to death; and that long after, when Alexander entered Egypt, he took up the bones of Jeremiah where they were buried in obscurity, and carried them to Alexandria, and buried them there. The prophecies of this book, which we have in the nineteen first chapters, seem to be the heads of the sermons he preached in a way of general reproof for sin, and denunciation of judgment; afterward they are more particular and occasional, and mixed with the history of his day, but not placed in due order of time. With the threatenings are intermixed many gracious promises of mercy to the penitent, of the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity, and some that have a plain reference to the kingdom of the Messiah. Among the Apocryphal writings, an epistle is extant, said to be written by Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon, warning them against the worship of idols, by exposing the vanity of them, and the folly of idolaters. It is in Baruch, *ch. vi.* But it is supposed not to be authentic; nor has it, I think, any thing like the life and spirit of Jeremiah's writings. It is also related concerning Jeremiah, (*2 Mac. ii. 4.*) that when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans, he, by direction from God, took the ark and altar of incense, and carrying them to mount Nebo, lodged them in a hollow cave there, and stopped the door; but some that followed him, and thought that they had marked the place, could not find it: he blamed them for seeking it, telling them that the place should be unknown till the time that God should gather his people together again. But I know not what credit is to be given to that story, though it is there said to be found in the records. We cannot but be concerned, in the reading of Jeremiah's prophecies, to find that they were so little regarded by the men of that generation; but let us make use of that as a reason why we should regard them the more; for they are written for our learning too, and for warning to us and to our land.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter we have, I. The general inscription or title of this book; with the time of the continuance of Jeremiah's public ministry, v. 1. . 3. II. The call of Jeremiah to the prophetic office, his modest objection against it answered, and an ample commission given him for the execution of it, v. 4. . 10. III. The visions of an almond-rod and a seething-pot, signifying the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, v. 11. . 16. IV. Encouragement given to the prophet to go on undauntedly in his work, in an assurance of God's presence with him, v. 17. . 19. Thus is he set to work by one that will be sure to bear him out.

1. **T**HE words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin: 2. To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. 3. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

We have here as much as it was thought fit we should know of the genealogy of this prophet, and the chronology of his prophecy.

1. We are told what family the prophet was of. He was the son of Hilkiah: not that Hilkiah, it is supposed, that was High Priest in Josiah's time, (for then he would have been called so, and not, as here, one of the priests that were in Anathoth,) but another of the same name. Jeremiah signifies one raised up by the Lord. It is said of Christ, that he is a prophet whom the Lord our God raised up unto us, Deut. xviii. 15, 18. He was of the priests, and, as a priest, was authorized and appointed to teach the people; but to that authority and appointment God added the extraordinary commission of a prophet. Ezekiel was also a priest. Thus God would support the honour of the priesthood at a time when, by their sins and God's judgments upon them, it was sadly eclipsed. He was of the priests in Anathoth; a city of priests, which lay about three miles from Jerusalem. Abiathar had his country house there, 1 Kings ii. 26.

2. We have the general date of his prophecies; the knowledge of which is requisite to the understanding of them. (1.) He began to prophesy in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, v. 2. Josiah, in the twelfth year of his reign, began a work of reformation, applied himself with all sincerity to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the images, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3. And very seasonably then was this young prophet raised up to assist and encourage the young king in that good work. Then the word of the Lord came to him; not only a charge and commission to him to prophesy, but a revelation of the things themselves which he was to deliver. As it is an encouragement to ministers to be countenanced and protected by such pious magistrates as Josiah was, so it is a great help to magistrates, in any good work of reformation, to be advised and animated, and to have a great deal of their work done for them, by such faithful, zealous ministers as Jeremiah was. Now, one would have expected when these two joined forces, such a prince, and such a prophet, (as in a like case, Ezra v. 1, 2.) and both young, such a complete reformation would have been brought about and settled, as would have prevented the ruin of the church and state; but it proved quite otherwise. In the eighteenth year of Josiah we find there were a great many of the relics of idolatry, that were not

purged out; for what can the best princes and prophets do to prevent the ruin of a people that hate to be reformed? And therefore, though it was a time of reformation, Jeremiah continued to foretell the destroying judgments that were coming upon them; for there is no symptom more threatening to any people than fruitless attempts of reformation. Josiah and Jeremiah would have healed them, but they would not be healed. (2.) He continued to prophesy through the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, who reigned eleven years apiece; he prophesied to the carrying away of Jerusalem captive, (v. 3.) that great event which he had so often prophesied of. He continued to prophesy after that, ch. xl. 1. But the computation here is made to end with that, because it was the accomplishment of many of his predictions; and from the thirteenth of Josiah to the captivity was just forty years. Dr. Lightfoot observes, that as Moses was so long with the people, a teacher in the wilderness, till they entered into their own land; Jeremiah was so long to their own land a teacher, before they went into the wilderness of the heathen; and he thinks that therefore a special mark is set upon the last forty years of the iniquity of Judah, which Ezekiel bore forty days, a day for a year, because, during all that time, they had Jeremiah prophesying among them, which was a great aggravation of their impenitency. God, in this prophet, suffered their manners, their ill manners, forty years, and at length swore in his wrath that they should not continue in his rest.

4. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 5. Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. 6. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child. 7. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. 8. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. 9. Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth: and the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. 10. See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

Here is,

I. Jeremiah's early designation to the work and office of a prophet, which God gives him notice of as a reason for his early application to that business; (v. 4, 5.) The word of the Lord came to him, with a satisfying assurance to himself that it was the word of the Lord, and not a delusion; and God told him, 1. That he had ordained him a prophet to the nations, or, against the nations; the nation of the Jews in the first place, who are therefore now reckoned among the nations, because they had learned their works, and mingled themselves with them in their idolatries, which otherwise they should not have been, Numb. xxiii. 9. Yet he was given to be a prophet, not to Jews only, but to the neighbouring nations; to whom he was to send yokes, (ch. xxvii. 3.) and whom he must make to drink of the cup of the Lord's anger, ch. xxv. 17. He is still in his writings a prophet to the nations (to convert nations

among the rest,) to tell them what the national judgments are which may be expected for national sins. It would be well for the nations, would they take Jeremiah for their prophet, and attend to the warnings he gives them. 2. That, before he was born, even in his eternal counsel, he had designed him to be so. Let him know, that He who gave him his commission, is the same that gave him his being, that *formed him in the belly, and brought him forth out of the womb*, and therefore was his rightful Owner, and might employ him, and make use of him, as he pleased; and that this commission was given him in pursuance of the purpose God had purposed in himself concerning him, before he was born; "*I knew thee, and I sanctified thee; I determined that thou shouldst be a prophet, and set thee apart for the office.*" Thus St. Paul says of himself, that God had *separated him from his mother's womb*, to be a Christian, and an apostle, Gal. i. 15. Observe, (1.) The great Creator knows what use to make of every man before he makes him; he has *made all for himself*, and of the same lumps of clay designs a *vessel of honour or dishonour*, as he pleases, Rom. ix. 21. (2.) What God has designed men for, he will call them to; for his purposes cannot be frustrated. Known unto God are all his own works beforehand, and his knowledge is infallible and his purpose unchangeable. (3.) There is a particular purpose and providence of God conversant about his prophets and ministers; they are by special counsel designed for their work, and what they are designed for they are fitted for; I that *knew thee, sanctified thee*. God destines them to it, and forms them for it, then when he first forms the spirit of man within him; *Propheta nascitur, non fit—A man is not educated unto a prophet, but originally formed for the office*.

II. His modest declining of this honourable employment, v. 6. Though God had predestinated him to it, yet it was news to him, and a mighty surprise to hear that he should be *a prophet to the nations*. We know not what God intends us for, but *He knows*. One would have thought he should have caught at it as a piece of preferment, for so it was; but he objects against it, disables himself; "*Ah, Lord God, behold, I cannot speak to great men and multitudes, as prophets must; I cannot speak finely or fluently; cannot word things well, as a message from God should be worded; I cannot speak with any authority, nor can expect to be heeded, for I am a child, and my youth will be despised.*" Note, It becomes us when we have any service to do for God, to be afraid lest we mismanage it, and lest it suffer, through our weakness and unfitness for it; it becomes us likewise to have low thoughts of ourselves, and to be diffident of our own sufficiency. Those that are young should consider that they are so; should be afraid, as Elihu was, and not venture beyond their length.

III. The assurance God graciously gave him, that he would stand by him, and carry him on in his work.

1. Let him not object that he is a child, he shall be a prophet for all that; (v. 7.) "*Say not any more I am a child: it is true thou art; but,*" (1.) "Thou hast God's precept, and let not that hinder thee from obeying it. Go to all to whom I shall send thee, and speak whatsoever I command thee." Note, Though a sense of our own weakness and insufficiency should make us go humbly about our work, yet it should not make us draw back from it when God calls us to it. God was angry with Moses even for his modest excuses, Exod. iv. 14. (2.) "Thou hast God's presence; and let not thy being young discourage thee from depending upon it. Though thou art a child, thou shalt be enabled to go to all to whom I shall send thee, though they were ever so

great, and ever so many. And *whatsoever I command thee*, thou shalt have judgment, memory, and language, wherewith to speak it, as it should be spoken." Samuel delivered a message from God to Eli, when he was a little child. Note, God can, when he pleases, make children prophets, and *ordain strength out of the mouths of babes and sucklings*.

2. Let him not object that he shall meet with many enemies and much opposition; God will be his protector; (v. 8.) "*Be not afraid of their faces; though they look big, and so think to outface thee, and put thee out of countenance, yet be not afraid to speak to them; no, not to speak that to them which is most displeasing; thou speakest in the name of the King of kings, and by authority from him, and with that thou mayest face them down.*" Though they look angry, be not afraid of their displeasure, nor disturbed with apprehensions of the consequences of it. Those that have messages to deliver from God, must not be *afraid of the face of man*, Ezek. iii. 9. And thou hast cause both to be bold and easy; for *I am with thee*, not only to assist thee in thy work, but to deliver thee out of the hands of the persecutors: and *if God be for thee, who can be against thee?*" If God do not deliver his ministers from trouble, it is to the same effect if he support them under their trouble. Mr. Gataker well observes here, That earthly princes are not wont to go along with their ambassadors; but God goes along with those whom he sends, and is, by his powerful protection, at all times, and in all places, present with them; and with this they ought to animate themselves, Acts xviii. 10.

3. Let him not object that he cannot speak as becomes him—God will enable him to speak.

(1.) To speak intelligently, and as one that had acquaintance with God, v. 9. He having now a vision of the divine glory, the Lord *put forth his hand*, and by a sensible sign conferred upon him so much of the gift of the tongue as was necessary for him; *he touched his mouth*, and with that touch *opened his lips*, that his mouth should show forth God's praise; and with that touch sweetly conveyed *his words into his mouth*, to be ready to him upon all such occasions; so that he could never want words who was thus furnished by Him that *made man's mouth*. God not only put knowledge into his head, but *words into his mouth*; for there are *words which the Holy Ghost teaches*, 1 Cor. ii. 13. It is fit God's message should be delivered in his own words, that it may be delivered punctually; (Ezek. iii. 4.) *Speak with my words*. And those that faithfully do so shall not want instructions as the case requires; *God will give them a mouth and wisdom in that same hour*, Matth. x. 19.

(2.) To speak powerfully, and as one that had authority from God, v. 10. It is a strange commission that is here given him; *See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms*; which sounds very great, and yet Jeremiah is a poor, despicable priest still; he is not set over the kingdoms as a prince, to rule them by the sword, but as a prophet, by the power of the word of God. Those that would from hence prove the Pope's supremacy over kings, and his authority to depose them, and dispose of their kingdoms at his pleasure, must prove that he has the same extraordinary Spirit of prophecy that Jeremiah had, else how can he have the power that Jeremiah had by virtue of that Spirit? And yet the power that Jeremiah had, who, notwithstanding his power, lived in meanness and contempt, and under oppression, would not content these proud men. Jeremiah was *set over the nations*, the Jewish nation in the first place, and other nations, some great ones besides, against whom he prophesied; was set over them, not to demand tri-

bute from them, or to enrich himself with their spoils, but to *root out*, and *pull down*, and *destroy*, and yet withal to *build* and *plant*. [1.] He must attempt to reform the nations, to *root out*, and *pull down*, and *destroy* idolatry and other wickedness among them, to extirpate those vicious habits and customs which had long taken root, to *throw down* the kingdom of sin, that religion and virtue might be *planted* and *built* among them. And to the introducing and establishing of that which is good, it is necessary that that which is evil be removed. [2.] He must tell them that it would be well or ill with them, according as they were, or were not, reformed. He must set before them *life and death*, *good or evil*, according to God's declaration of the method he takes with kingdoms and nations, *ch. xviii. 7, 10*. He must assure those who persisted in their wickedness, that they should be *rooted and destroyed*, and those who repented, that they should be *built and planted*. He was authorized to read the doom of nations, and God would *ratify it*, and *fulfil it*, (*Isa. xlv. 26.*) would do it according to his word, and therefore is said to do it by his word. It is thus expressed, partly to show how sure the word of prophecy is—it will as certainly be accomplished as if it were done already; and partly to put an honour upon the prophetic office, and make it look truly great, that others may not despise prophets, nor they disparage themselves. And yet more honourable does the gospel-ministry look, in that declarative power Christ gave his apostles, to *remit and retain sin*, (*John xx. 23.*) to *bind and loose*, *Matth. xviii. 18*.

11. Moreover, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond-tree. 12. Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it. 13. And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething-pot, and the face thereof is toward the north. 14. Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. 15. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. 16. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burnt incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands. 17. Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. 18. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defended city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land; against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. 19. And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail

against thee; for I *am* with thee, saith 'ho LORD, to deliver thee.

Here,

I. God gives Jeremiah, in vision, a view of the principal errand he was to go upon, which was to foretell the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, for their sins, especially their idolatry. This was at first represented to him, in a way proper to make an impression upon him, that he might have it upon his heart in all his dealings with this people.

1. He intimates to him that the people were ripening apace for ruin, and that ruin was hastening apace toward them. God, having answered his objection, that he was a *child*, goes on to initiate him in the prophetic learning and language; and, having promised to enable him to speak intelligibly to the people, he here teaches him to understand what God says to him; for prophets must have *eyes* in their heads as well as *tongues*, must be seers as well as speakers; he therefore asks him, "*Jeremiah, what seest thou?*" Look about thee, and observe now." And he was soon aware of what was presented to him; *I see a rod*, denoting affliction and chastisement; a correcting rod hanging over us; and it is a *rod of an almond-tree*, which is one of the forwardest trees in the spring, is in the bud and blossoms quickly, when other trees are scarcely broken out; it flourishes, says Pliny, in the month of January, and by March has ripe fruits; hence it is called in the Hebrew, *Shakedh*, the *hasty tree*, whether this rod that Jeremiah saw had already budded, as some think, or whether it was stripped and dry, as others think, and yet Jeremiah knew it to be of an almond-tree, as Aaron's rod was, is uncertain; but God explained it in the next words; (*v. 12.*) *Thou hast well seen*. God commended him that he was so observant, and so quick of apprehension, as to be aware, though it was the first vision he ever saw, that it was a *rod of an almond-tree*; that his mind was so composed as to be able to distinguish. Prophets have need of good eyes; and those that *see* well shall be commended, and not those only that *speak* well. "Thou hast seen a *hasty tree*, which signifies that *I will hasten my word to perform it.*" Jeremiah shall prophesy that which he himself shall live to see accomplished. We have the explication of this, *Ezek. vii. 10, 11.* "*The rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded, violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness.*" The measure of Jerusalem's iniquity fills very fast; and as if their destruction slumbered too long, they waken it, they hasten it, and I will hasten to perform what I have spoken against them."

2. He intimates to him whence the intended ruin should arise; Jeremiah is a second time asked, *What seest thou?* He sees a *seething-pot* upon the fire, (*v. 13.*) representing Jerusalem and Judah in great commotion, like boiling water, by reason of the descent which the Chaldean army made upon them; made *like a fiery oven*, (*Ps. xxi. 9.*) all in a heat, wasting away as boiling water does, and sensibly evaporating and growing less and less; ready to boil over, to be thrown out of their own city and land, as out of the pan into the fire, from bad to worse. Some think that those scoffers referred to this, who said, (*Ezek. xi. 3.*) *The city is the caldron, and we be the flesh*. Now the mouth or face of the furnace or hearth, over which this pot boiled was *toward the north*; for thence the fire and fuel were to come, that must *make the pot boil thus*. So the vision is explained, *v. 14.* *Out of the north an evil shall break forth, or shall be opened*. It had been long designed by the justice of God, and long deserved by the sin of the people, and yet hitherto the divine patience had restrained it, and held it in, as it were;

the enemies had intended it, and God had checked them; but now all restraints shall be taken off, and the *evil shall break forth*; the direful scene shall open, and the enemy shall come in like a flood. It shall be a universal calamity, it shall come *upon all the inhabitants of the land*, from the highest to the lowest, for they have all corrupted their way. Look for this storm to arise *out of the north, whence fair weather usually comes*, Job xxxvii. 22. When there was friendship between Hezekiah and the king of Babylon, they promised themselves many advantages *out of the north*; but it proved quite otherwise, *out of the north* their trouble arose. Thence sometimes the fiercest tempests come, whence we expected fair weather. This is further explained, v. 15. where we may observe, (1.) The raising of the army that shall invade Judah, and lay it waste; *I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord*. All the northern crowns shall unite under Nebuchadnezzar, and join with him in this expedition. They lay dispersed, but God, who has all men's hearts in his hand, will bring them together; they lie at a distance from Judah, but God, who directs all men's steps, will call them, and they shall come, though they be ever so far off. God's summons shall be obeyed; they whom he calls shall come. When he has work to do of any kind, he will find instruments to do it, though he send to the utmost parts of the earth for them. And that the armies brought into the field may be sufficiently numerous and strong, he will call not only the *kingdoms of the north, but all the families* of those kingdoms into the service; not one able-bodied man shall be left behind. (2.) The advance of this army; the commanders of the troops of the several nations shall take their post in carrying on the siege of Jerusalem, and the other cities of Judah. They shall set *every one his throne*, or seat. When a city is besieged, we say, The enemy sits down before it; they shall encamp some at the *entering of the gates*, others *against the walls round about*, to cut off both the going out of the mouths, and the coming in of the meat, and so to starve them.

3. He tells him plainly what was the procuring cause of all these judgments; it was the *sin of Jerusalem*, and of the *cities of Judah*; (v. 16.) *I will have sentence upon them*; so it may be read; or *give judgment against them*, this sentence, this judgment, *because of all their wickedness*; that is it that plucks up the flood-gates, and lets in this inundation of calamities. They *have forsaken God*, and revolted from their allegiance to him, and have *burnt incense to other gods*, new gods, strange gods, and all false gods, pretenders, usurpers, the creatures of their own fancy, and they *have worshipped the works of their own hands*. Jeremiah was young, had looked but little abroad into the world, and perhaps did not know, nor could have believed, what abominable idolatries the children of his people were guilty of; but God tells him, that he might know what to level his reproofs against, and what to ground his threatenings upon, and that he might himself be satisfied in the equity of the sentence which, in God's name, he was to pass upon them.

11. God excites and encourages Jeremiah to apply himself with all diligence and seriousness to his business. A great trust is committed to him; he is sent, in God's name, as a herald at arms, to proclaim war against his rebellious subjects; for God is pleased to give warning of his judgments beforehand, that sinners may be awakened to meet him by repentance, and so *turn away his wrath*, and that, if they do not, they may be left inexcusable. With this trust Jeremiah has a charge given him; (v. 17.) *"Thou, therefore, gird up thy loins; free thyself from all those things that would unfit thee*

for, or hinder thee in, this service; buckle to it with readiness and resolution; and be not entangled with doubts about it." He must be quick—*Arise*, and lose no time; he must be busy—*Arise*, and *speak unto them* in season, out of season; he must be bold—*Be not dismayed at their faces*, as before, v. 8. In a word, he must be faithful; it is required of ambassadors that they be so.

In two things he must be faithful. 1. He must speak all that he is charged with; *Speak all that I command thee*. He must forget nothing as minute, or foreign, or not worth mentioning; every word of God is weighty. He must conceal nothing for fear of offending; he must alter nothing under pretence of making it more fashionable or more palatable, but without addition or diminution, *declare the whole counsel of God*. 2. He must *speak to all* that he is charged against; he must not whisper it in a corner to a few particular friends that will take it well, but he must appear *against the kings of Judah*, if they be wicked kings, and bear his testimony against the sins even of the *princes thereof*; for the greatest of men are not exempt from the judgments, either of God's hand, or of his mouth. Nay, he must not spare the *priests thereof*; though he himself was a priest, and was concerned to maintain the dignity of his order, yet he must not therefore flatter them in their sins. He must appear against the *people of the land*, though they were his own people, as far as they were *against the Lord*.

And two reasons are here given why he should do thus: (1.) Because he had *reason to fear the wrath of God*, if he should be false; *"Be not dismayed at their faces*, so as to desert thine office, or shrink from the duty of it, *lest I confound and dismay thee before them; lest I give thee up to thy faint-heartedness*." Those that consult their own credit, ease, and safety, more than their work and duty, are justly left of God to themselves, and to bring upon themselves the shame of their own cowardliness. Nay, *lest I reckon with thee for thy faint-heartedness, and break thee to pieces*; so some read it. Therefore this prophet says, ch. xvii. 17. *Lord, Be not thou a terror to me*. Note, The fear of God is the best antidote against the fear of man. Let us always be afraid of offending God, who after he has killed has power to cast into hell, and then we shall be in little danger of fearing the faces of men that can but kill the body, Luke xii. 4, 5. See Neh. iv. 14. It is better to have all the men in the world our enemies than God our Enemy.

(2.) Because he had *no reason to fear the wrath of man* if he were faithful; for the God whom he served, would protect him, and bear him out, so that they should neither sink his spirits, nor drive him off from his work, should neither stop his mouth, nor take away his life, till he had finished his testimony, v. 18. This young stripling of a prophet is made by the power of God, as an impregnable city, fortified with iron pillars and surrounded with walls of brass; he sallies out upon them in reproofs and threatenings, and *keeps them in awe*. They set upon him on every side; the kings and princes batter him with their power, the priests thunder against him with their church-censures, and the *people of the land* shoot their arrows at him, even slanderous and bitter words; but he shall keep his ground, and make his part good with them; he shall still be a curb upon them; (v. 19.) *They shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail to destroy thee, for I am with thee to deliver thee out of their hands; nor shall they prevail to defeat the word that God sends them by Jeremiah, nor to deliver themselves, it shall take hold of them, for God is against them to destroy them*. Note, Those who are sure that they have God with them, (as he is if they be with him,)

need not, ought not, to be afraid, whoever is against them.

CHAP. II.

It is probable that this chapter was Jeremiah's first sermon after his ordination; and a most lively, pathetic sermon it is as any we have in all the books of the prophets. Let him not say, *I cannot speak, for I am a child*; for, God having touched his mouth, and put his words into it, none can speak better. The scope of the chapter is to shew God's people their transgressions, even the house of Jacob their sins; it is all by way of reproof and conviction, that they might be brought to repent of their sins, and so prevent the ruin that was coming upon them. The charge drawn up against them is very high, the aggravations black, the arguments used for their conviction very close and pressing, and the expostulations very pungent and affecting. The sin which they are most particularly charged with here, is idolatry, forsaking the true God, their own God, for other false gods. Now they are told, I. That this was ungrateful to God, who had been so kind to them, v. 1. . 8. II. That it was without precedent, that a nation should change their god, v. 9. . 13. III. That hereby they had disparaged and ruined themselves, v. 14. . 19. IV. That they had broken their covenants, and degenerated from their good beginnings, v. 20, 21. V. That their wickedness was too plain to be concealed, and too bad to be excused, v. 22, 23, 25. VI. That they persisted wilfully and obstinately in it, and were irreclaimable and indefatigable in their idolatries, v. 24, 25, 33, 36. VII. That they shamed themselves by their idolatry, and should shortly be made ashamed of it when they should find their idols unable to help them, v. 26. . 29, 37. VIII. That they had not been convinced and reformed by the rebukes of Providence, v. 30. IX. That they had put a great contempt upon God, v. 31, 32. X. That with their idolatries they had mixed the most unnatural murders, shedding the blood of the poor innocents, v. 34. Those hearts were hard indeed, that were untouched and unhumbed when their sins were thus set in order before them. O that by meditating on this chapter we might be brought to repent of our spiritual idolatries, giving that place in our souls to the world and the flesh, which should have been reserved for God only!

1. **M**OREOVER, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2. Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. 3. Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the first-fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD. 4. Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: 5. Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? 6. Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness; through a land of deserts, and of pits; through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt? 7. And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof, and the goodness thereof: but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination. 8. The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle

the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.

Here is,

I. A command given to Jeremiah to go and carry a message from God to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He was charged in general (*ch. i. 17.*) to go, and *speak to them*; here he is particularly charged to go, and speak *this* to them. Note, It is good for ministers by faith and prayer to take out a fresh commission, when they address themselves solemnly to any part of their work. Let a minister carefully compare what he has to deliver with the word of God, and see that it agrees with it, that he may be able to say, not only *The Lord sent me*, but, *He sent me to speak this*. He must go from Anathoth, where he lived in a pleasant retirement, spending his time (it is likely) among a few friends, and in the study of the law, and must make his appearance at Jerusalem, that noisy, tumultuous city, and *cry in their ears*, as a man in earnest, and that would be heard; "Cry aloud, that all may hear, and none may plead ignorance. Go close to them, and *cry in the ears* of those that have stopped their ears."

II. The message he was commanded to deliver. He must upbraid them with their horrid ingratitude in forsaking a God who had been of old so kind to them; that this might either make them ashamed, and bring them to repentance, or might justify God in turning his hand against them.

1. God here puts them in mind of the favours he had of old bestowed upon them, when they were first formed into a people; (*v. 2.*) "*I remember for thy sake*, and I would have thee to remember it, and improve the remembrance of it for thy good; I cannot forget the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals."

(1.) Of the kindness they had for God; it was not such indeed as they had any reason to boast of, or to plead with God for favour to be showed them; (for many of them were very unkind and provoking, and when they did return, and inquire early after God, they did but flatter him;) yet God is pleased to mention it, and plead it with them; for though it was but little love that they showed him, he took it kindly. When they believed the Lord and his servant Moses, when they sang God's praise at the Red sea, when at the foot of mount Sinai, they promised, *All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do, and will be obedient*; then was the kindness of their youth, and the love of their espousals. When they seemed so forward for God, he said, *Surely they are my people*, and will be faithful to me, *children that will not lie*. Note, Those that begin well, and promise fair, but do not perform and persevere, will justly be upbraided with their hopeful and promising beginnings. God remembers the kindness of our youth, and the love of our espousals, the zeal we then seemed to have for him, and the affection wherewith we made our covenants with him, the buds and blossoms that never came to perfection; and it is good for us to remember them, that we may remember whence we are fallen, and return to our first love, Rev. ii. 4, 5. Gal. iv. 15.

In two things appeared the kindness of their youth. [1.] That they followed the direction of the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness; and though sometimes they spake of returning into Egypt, or pushing forward into Canaan, yet they did neither, but for forty years together went after God in the wilderness, and trusted him to provide for them, though it was a land that was not sown. This God took kindly, and took notice of it to their praise long after, that though much was amiss

among them, yet they never forsook the direction they were under. Thus, though Christ often chided his disciples, yet he commended them, at parting, for continuing with him, Luke xxii. 28. It must be the strong affection of the youth, and the espousals, that will carry us on to follow God in a wilderness, with an implicit faith, and an entire resignation; and it is a pity that those who have so followed him, should ever leave him. [2.] That they entertained divine institutions, set up the tabernacle among them, and attended the service of it. *Israel was then holiness to the Lord*, they joined themselves to him in covenant as a peculiar people. Thus they began in the Spirit, and God puts them in mind of it, that they might be ashamed of ending *in the flesh*.

Or, it may be understood, (2.) Of God's *kindness to them*; of that he afterwards speaks largely; *When Israel was a child, then I loved him*, Hos. xi. 1. He then espoused that people to himself with all the affection with which a *young man marries a virgin*, (ch. lxiii. 5.) for the time was a *time of love*, Ezek. xvi. 8.

[1.] God appropriated them to himself; though they were a sinful people, yet by virtue of the covenant made with them, and the church set up among them, they were *holiness to the Lord*, dedicated to his honour, and taken under his special tuition: they were the *first-fruits of his increase*, the first constituted church he had in the world; these were the first-fruits, but the full harvest was to be gathered from among the Gentiles. The *first-fruits of the increase* were God's part of it, were offered to him, and he was honoured with them; so were the people of the Jews; what little tribute, rent, and homage God had from the world, he had it chiefly from them; and it was their honour to be thus set apart from God. This honour have all the saints, they are the *first-fruits of his creatures*, Jam. i. 18.

[2.] Having espoused them, he espoused their cause, and became an *Enemy to their enemies*, Exod. xxiii. 22. Being the *first-fruits of his increase, all that devoured him*, (so it should be read,) *did offend, they trespassed*, they contracted guilt, and evil befell them; as those were reckoned *offenders*, that devoured the *first-fruits*, or any thing else that was *holy to the Lord*, that embezzled them, or converted them to their own use, Lev. v. 15. Whoever offered any injury to the people of God, did it *at their peril*; their God was ready to avenge their quarrel, and said to the proudest of kings, *Touch not mine anointed*, Ps. cv. 14, 15. Exod. xvii. 14. He had in a special manner a controversy with those that attempted to debauch them, and draw them off from being *holiness to the Lord*; witness his quarrel with the *Medianites about the matter of Peor*, Numb. xxv. 17, 18.

[3.] He brought them out of *Egypt* with a high hand and great terror, (Deut. iv. 34.) and yet with a kind hand and great tenderness led them through a vast howling wilderness, (v. 6.) *a land of deserts and pits*; or of graves, *terram sepulchralem—a sepulchral land*, where there was ground, not to feed them, but to bury them; where there was no good to be expected, for it was a *land of drought*, but all manner of evil to be feared, for it was the *shadow of death*; in that darksome valley they walked forty years; but *God was with them, his rod, in Moses's hand, and his staff, comforted them*, and even there God prepared a table for them, (Ps. xxiii. 4, 5.) gave them bread out of the clouds, and drink out of the rocks. It was a land abandoned by all mankind, as yielding neither road nor rest; it was no thoroughfare, for *no man passed through it*; no settlement, for *no man dwelt there*; for God will teach his people to tread untrodden paths, to dwell alone, and to be singular. The difficulties of the journey were thus insisted on, to magnify the power and good-

ness of God in bringing them, through all, safe to their journey's end at last. All God's spiritual Israel must own their obligations to him for a safe conduct through the wilderness of this world, no less dangerous to the soul than that was to the body.

[4.] At length he settled them in Canaan; (v. 7.) *I brought you into a plentiful country*; which would be the more acceptable after they had been for so many years in a *land of drought*. They did *eat the fruit thereof*, and the *goodness thereof*, and were allowed so to do. *I brought you into a land of Carmel*; so the word is; Carmel was a place of extraordinary fruitfulness; Canaan was as one great fruitful field, Deut. viii. 7.

[5.] God gave them the means of knowledge and grace, and communion with him; this is implied, v. 8. They had priests that *handled the law*, read it, and expounded it to them; that was part of their business, Deut. xxxiii. 8. They had pastors to guide them, and take care of their affairs, magistrates and judges; they had prophets to consult God for them, and to make known his mind to them.

2. He upbraids them with their horrid ingratitude, and the ill returns they had made him for these favours; let them all come, and answer to this charge; (v. 4.) it is exhibited in the name of God against *all the families of the house of Israel*, for they can none of them plead *Not guilty*.

(1.) He challenges them to produce any instance of his being unjust and unkind to them. Though he had conferred favours upon them in some things, yet, if in other things he had dealt hardly with them, they had not been altogether without excuse. He therefore puts it fairly to them to show cause for their deserting him; (v. 5.) "*What iniquity have your fathers found in me, or you either? Have you, upon trial, found God a hard Master? Have his commands put any hardship upon you, or obliged you to any thing unfit, unfair, or unbecoming you? Have his promises put any cheats upon you, or raised your expectations of things which you were afterward disappointed of? You that renounce your covenant with God, can you say that it was a hard bargain, and that which you could not live upon? You that forsake the ordinances of God, can you say that it was because they were a wearisome service, or work that there was nothing to be got by? No, the disappointments you have met with, were owing to yourselves, not to God. The yoke of his commandments is easy, and in keeping of them there is great reward.*" Note, Those that forsake God cannot say that he has ever given them any provocation to do so: for this we may safely appeal to the consciences of sinners; the slothful servant that offered such a plea as this, had it overruled out of his own mouth, Luke xix. 22. Though he afflicts us, we cannot say that there is iniquity in him, he doeth us no wrong; the ways of the Lord are undoubtedly equal, all the iniquity is in our ways.

(2.) He charges them with being very unjust and unkind to him notwithstanding.

[1.] They had quitted his service; "*They are gone from me*, nay, they are gone far from me." They studied how to estrange themselves from God and their duty, and got as far as they could out of the reach of his commandments and their own convictions. Those that have deserted religion, commonly set themselves at a greater distance from it, and in a greater opposition to it, than those that never knew it.

[2.] They had quitted it for the service of idols, which was so much the greater reproach to God and his service; they went from him, not to mend themselves, but to cheat themselves; *they have walked after vanity*, that is, idolatry; for an idol is a vain thing, it is nothing in the world, 1 Cor. viii. 4. Deut. xxxii. 21. Jer. xiv. 22. Idolatrous wor-

ships are vanities, Acts xiv. 15. Idolaters are vain, for they that make idols are *like unto them*, (Ps. cxv. 8.) as much stocks and stones as the images they worship, and good for as little.

[3.] They had with idolatry introduced all manner of wickedness. When they entered into the good land which God gave them, they defiled it, (v. 7.) by defiling themselves, and disfitting themselves for the service of God. It was God's land, they were but tenants to him, sojourners in it, Lev. xxv. 23. It was his heritage, for it was a holy land, Immanuel's land; but they *made it an abomination*, even to God himself, who was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel.

[4.] Having forsaken God, though they soon found that they had changed for the worse, yet they had no thoughts of returning to him again, nor took any steps towards it. Neither the people nor the priests made any inquiry after him, took no thought about their duty to him, nor expressed any desire to recover his favour. *First, The people* said not, *Where is the Lord?* v. 6. Though they were trained up in an observance of him as their God, and had been often told that he *brought them out of the land of Egypt*, to be a peculiar people to himself, yet they never asked after him, nor desired the *knowledge of his ways*. *Secondly, The priests* said not, *Where is the Lord?* v. 8. They whose office it was to attend immediately upon him, were in no concern to acquaint themselves with him, or approve themselves to him. They who should have instructed the people in the knowledge of God, took no care to get the knowledge of him themselves. The scribes, who *handled the law*, did not know God nor his will, could not expound the scriptures at all, or not aright. The pastors, who should have kept the flock from transgressing, were themselves ringleaders in transgression: *They have transgressed against me*. The pretenders to prophecy prophesied by Balaam, in his name, to his honour, being backed and supported by the wicked kings, to confront the Lord's prophets. Balaam's prophets joined with Balaam's priests, and walked after the *things which do not profit*, after the idols which can be no way helpful to their worshippers. See how the best characters are usurped, and the best offices liable to corruption; and wonder not at the sin and ruin of a people when the *blind are leaders of the blind*.

9. Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead. 10. For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing: 11. Hath a nation changed *their gods*, which *are yet no gods*? but my people have changed their glory for *that which doth not profit*. 12. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. 13. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

The prophet having shown their base ingratitude in forsaking God, here shows their unparalleled fickleness and folly; (v. 9.) *I will yet plead with you*. Note, Before God punishes sinners, he pleads with them, to bring them to repentance. Again, When much has been said of the evil of sin, still there is more to be said, when one article of the

charge is made good, there is another to be urged; when we have said a great deal, still *we have yet to speak on God's behalf*, Job xxxvi. 2. Those that deal with sinners, for their conviction, must urge a variety of arguments, and follow their blow. God had before pleaded with their fathers, and asked why they *walked after vanity*, and became vain, v. 5. Now he pleads with them, who persisted in *that vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers, and with their children's children*, with all that in every age tread in their steps. Let those that forsake God know that he is willing to argue the case fairly with them, that he may be *justified when he speaks*. He pleads that with us, which we should plead with ourselves.

1. He shows that they acted contrary to the usage of all nations; their neighbours were more firm and faithful to their false gods than they were to the true God. They were ambitious of being *like the nations*, and yet in this they were unlike them. He challenges them to produce an instance of any nation that had *changed their gods*, (v. 10, 11.) or were apt to change them. Let them survey either the old records, or the present state, of the isles of Chittim, Greece, and the European islands, the countries that were more polite and learned; and of Kedar, that lay south-east, (as the other north-west from them,) which were more rude and barbarous; and they should not find an instance of a nation that had *changed their gods*, though they had never done them any kindness, nor could do, for *they were no gods*. Such a veneration had they for their gods, so good an opinion of them, and such a respect for the choice their fathers had made, that though they were gods of wood and stone, they would not change them for gods of silver and gold, no not for the living and true God. *Shall we praise them for this? We praise them not*. But it may well be urged, to the reproach of Israel, that they who were the only people that had no cause to change their God, were yet the only people that had changed him. Note, Men are with difficulty brought off that religion which they had been brought up in, though ever so absurd and grossly false. The zeal and constancy of idolaters should shame Christians out of their coldness and inconstancy.

II. He shows that they acted contrary to the dictates of common sense, in that they not only changed, (it may sometimes be our duty and wisdom to do so,) but that they changed *for the worse*, and made a bad bargain for themselves. 1. They parted from a God who was their Glory; who made them truly glorious, and every way put honour upon them, one whom they might with a humble confidence glory in as theirs, who is himself a glorious God, and the glory of those whose God he is; he was particularly the glory of his people Israel, for his glory had often appeared on their tabernacle. 2. They closed with gods that could do them no good; gods that *do not profit* their worshippers. Idolaters change God's glory into shame, (Rom. i. 23.) and so they do their own; in dishonouring him, they disgrace and disparage themselves, and are enemies to their own interest. Note, Whatever they turn to who forsake God, it will never do them any good; it will flatter them and please them, but it *cannot profit them*.

Heaven itself is here called upon to stand amazed at the sin and folly of these apostates from God; (v. 12, 13.) *Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this*. The earth is so universally corrupt, that it will take no notice of it; but let the heavens and heavenly bodies be astonished at it. Let the sun blush to see such ingratitude, and be afraid to shine upon such ungrateful wretches. They that forsook God, worshipped *the host of heaven*, the sun, moon, and stars, but these, instead of being pleased with the adora-

ions that were paid to them, *were astonished and horribly afraid*; and would rather have been *very desolate, utterly exhausted*, as the word is, and deprived of their light, than that it should have given occasion to any to worship them. Some refer it to *the angels of heaven*; if they rejoice at the return of souls to God, we may suppose that they are astonished and horribly afraid at the revolt of souls from him. The meaning is, that the conduct of his people toward God was such as, (1.) We may well admire and wonder at, that ever men, who pretend to reason, should do a thing so very absurd.

2.) Such as we ought to have a holy indignation at as impious, and a high affront to our Maker, whose honour every good man is jealous for. (3.) Such as we may tremble to think of the consequences of; what will be in the end hereof. Be horribly afraid to think of the wrath and curse which will be the portion of those who thus throw themselves out of God's grace and favour. Now what is it that is to be thought of with all this horror? it is this; "*My people*, whom I have taught, and should have ruled, *have committed two great evils*, ingratitude and folly; they have acted contrary both to their duty and to their interest. [1.] They have *affronted their God*, by turning their back upon him, as if he were not worthy their notice; "*They have forsaken me, the Fountain of living waters*, in whom they have an abundant and constant supply of all the comfort and relief they stand in need of, and they have it freely." God is their *Fountain of life*, Ps. xxxvi. 9. There is in him an all-sufficiency of grace and strength; all our springs are in him, and our streams from him; to forsake him is, in effect, to deny this; he has been to us a bountiful Benefactor, a *Fountain of living waters*, overflowing, ever-flowing, in the gifts of his favour; to forsake him is to refuse to acknowledge his kindness, and to withhold that tribute of love and praise, which his kindness calls for. [2.] They have cheated themselves; they forsook *their own mercies*, but it was for lying vanities; they took a great deal of pains to *hew them out cisterns*, to dig pits or pools in the earth or rock, which they would carry water to, or which should receive the rain; but they proved *broken cisterns*, also at the bottom, so that they could hold no water. When they came to quench their thirst there, they found nothing but mud and mire, and the filthy sediment of a standing lake. Such idols were to their worshippers, and such a change did they experience, who turned from God to them. If we make an idol of any creature, wealth, or pleasure, or honour, if we place our happiness in it, and promise ourselves the comfort and satisfaction in it which are to be had in God only, if we make it our joy and love, our hope and confidence, we shall find it a *cistern*, which we take a great deal of pains to hew out and fill, and at the best it will hold but a little water, and that dead and flat, and soon corrupting, and become nauseous. Nay, it is a *broken cistern*, that cracks and cleaves in hot weather, so that the water is gone when we have most need of it, Job vi. 15. Let us therefore with purpose of heart cleave to the Lord only, for whither else *shall we go*? He has the *words of eternal life*.

14. *Is Israel a servant? is he a home-born slave?* why is he spoiled? 15. The young lions roared upon him and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burnt without inhabitant. 16. Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken the crown of thy head. 17. Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led

thee by the way? 18. And now, what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river? 19. Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know, therefore, and see, that *it is an evil thing* and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the LORD God of hosts.

The prophet further to evince the folly of their forsaking God, shows them what mischiefs they had already brought upon themselves by it; it had already cost them dear, for to this were owing all the calamities their country was now groaning under; which were but an earnest of more and greater if they repented not. See how they smarted for their folly.

1. Their neighbours, who were their professed enemies, prevailed against them, and that was in consequence of their sin.

1. They were enslaved, and lost their liberty; (v. 14.) *Is Israel a servant?* No, *Israel is no son, my first-born*; (Exod. iv. 22.) they are children, they are heirs; nay, their extraction is noble, they are the seed of Abraham, God's friend, and of Jacob his chosen. *Is he a home-born slave?* No, he is not the *son of the bond-woman*, but of the free; they were designed for dominion, not for servitude. Every thing in their constitution carried on it the marks of freedom and honour: *why then is he spoiled of his liberty?* Why is he used as a servant, as a *home-born slave?* Why does he *make himself a slave* to his lusts, to his idols, to that which does not profit? v. 11. What a thing is this, that such a birth-right should be sold for a mess of pottage! Such a crown profaned, and laid in the dust! Why is he made a slave to the oppressor? God provided that a Hebrew servant should be free the seventh year, and that their slaves should be *of the heathen, not of their brethren*, Lev. xxv. 44, 46. But, notwithstanding this, the princes made slaves of their subjects, and masters of their servants, (ch. xxxiv. 11.) and so made their country mean and miserable, which God had made happy and honourable. The neighbouring princes and powers broke in upon them, and made some of them slaves even in their own country, and perhaps sold others for slaves into foreign countries. And how came they thus to lose their liberties? *For their iniquities they sold themselves*, Isa. l. 1. We may apply this spiritually; *Is the soul of man a servant?* *Is it a home-born slave?* No, it is not; why then is it spoiled? It is because it has sold its own liberty, and enslaved itself to divers lusts and passions, which is a lamentation, and should be for a lamentation.

2. They were impoverished, and had lost their wealth. God brought them into a plentiful country, (v. 7.) but all their neighbours made a prey of it, (v. 15.) *young lions roar aloud over him, and yell*; they are a continual terror to him; sometimes one potent enemy, and sometimes another, and sometimes many in confederacy, fall upon him, and triumph over him. They carry off the fruits of his land, and make that *waste, burn his cities*, when first they have plundered them, so that they remain without inhabitant, either because there are no houses to dwell in, or because those that should dwell in them are carried into captivity.

3. They were abused, and insulted over, and beaten by every body; (v. 16.) "*Even the children of Noph and Tahapanes*, despicable people, not

famed for military courage or strength, *have broken the crown of thy head*, or fed upon it. In all their struggles with thee they have been too hard for thee, and thou hast always come off with a broken head. The principal part of thy country, that which lay next Jerusalem, has been, and is, a prey to them." How calamitous the condition of Judah had been of late, in the reign of Manasseh, we find, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11. and perhaps it had not now much recovered itself.

4. All this was owing to their sin; (v. 17.) *Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?* By their sinful confederacies with the nations, and especially their conformity to them in their idolatrous customs and usages, they had made themselves very mean and contemptible, as all those do that have made a profession of religion, and afterward throw it off. Nothing now appeared of that, which, by their constitution, made them both honourable and formidable, and therefore nobody either respected them or feared them. But this was not all; they had provoked God to give them up into the hands of their enemies, and to make them a scourge to them and give them success against them; and thus thou hast *procured it to thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God*, revolted from thine allegiance to him, and so thrown thyself out of his protection; for protection and allegiance go together. Whatever trouble we are in at any time, we may thank ourselves for it; for we bring it upon our own head by our forsaking God, "*Thou hast forsaken thy God, at the time that he was leading thee by the way;*" (so it should be read); "then, when he was leading thee on to a happy peace and settlement, and thou wast within a step of it, then thou forsookest him, and so didst put a bar in thine own door."

II. Their neighbours, that were their pretended friends, deceived them, distressed them, and helped them not; and this also was owing to their sin.

1. They did in vain seek to Egypt and Assyria for help; (v. 18.) "*What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt?*" When thou art under apprehensions of danger, thou art running to Egypt for help, Isa. xxx. 1, 2.—xxx. 1. Thou art for *drinking the waters of Sihor*, that is, *Nilus*. "Thou reliest upon their multitude, and refreshest thyself with the fair promises they make thee; at other times thou art in the way of *Assyria*, sending or going with all speed to fetch recruits thence, and thinkest to satisfy thyself with the *waters of the river Euphrates*; but what *hast thou to do* there? What wilt thou get by applying thyself to them? They shall *help in vain*, shall be broken reeds to thee, and what thou thoughtest would be to thee as a river, will be but a broken cistern."

2. This also was because of their sin; the judgment shall unavoidably come upon them which their sin has deserved; and then to what purpose is it to call in for help against it! (v. 19.) "*Thine own wickedness shall correct thee*, and then it is impossible for them to save thee; *know and see* therefore, upon the whole matter, *that it is an evil thing that thou hast forsaken God*, for that is it that makes thine enemies enemies indeed, and thy friends friends in vain." Observe here, (1.) The nature of sin; it is *forsaking the Lord* as our God; it is the soul's alienation from him, and aversion to him. Cleaving to sin is leaving God. (2.) The cause of sin; it is because *his fear is not in us*. It is for want of a good principle in us, particularly for want of the fear of God; this is at the bottom of our apostacy from him; *therefore* men forsake their duty to God, because they stand in no awe of him, nor have any dread of his displeasure. (3.) The malignity of sin; it is *an evil thing* and a *bitter*. Sin is an evil thing, an evil that has no good in it, an evil that is the root and cause of all other evil; it is evil in-

deed, for it is not only the greatest contrariety to the divine nature, but the greatest corruption of the human nature. It is *bitter*; a state of sin is the *gall of bitterness*, and every sinful way will be *bitterness in the latter end*; the wages of it is death, and death is bitter. (4.) The fatal consequences of sin; as it is in itself evil and bitter, so it has a direct tendency to make us miserable; "*Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee*; not only destroy and ruin thee hereafter, but correct and reprove thee now; they will certainly bring trouble upon thee; the punishment will so inevitably follow the sin, that the sin shall itself be said to punish thee. Nay, the punishment, in its kind and circumstances, shall so directly answer to the sin, that thou mayest read the sin in the punishment; and the justice of the punishment shall be so plain, that thou shalt not have a word to say for thyself, thy own wickedness shall convince thee and stop thy mouth for ever, and thou shalt be forced to own that *the Lord is righteous*." (5.) The use and application of all this; "*Know therefore*, and see it, and repent of thy sin, that so the iniquity which is thy correction, *may not be thy ruin*."

20. For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill, and under every green tree, thou wanderest, playing the harlot. 21. Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me? 22. For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God. 23. How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? See thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done: *thou art* a swift dromedary traversing her ways; 24. A wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away? All they that seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they shall find her. 25. Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst: but thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go. 26. As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets. 27. Saying to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned *their* back unto me, and not *their* face; but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us. 28. But where *are* thy gods that thou hast made thee? Let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for *according to the number of thy cities are thy gods*, O Judah.

In these verses, the prophet goes on with his charge against this backsliding people; observe here,

I. The sin itself that he charges them with--

of idlatry, that great provocation which they were so notoriously guilty of. 1. They frequented the places of idol-worship; (v. 20.) *upon every high hill, and under every green tree*, in the high places and the groves, such as the heathen had a foolish fondness and veneration for; thou wanderest first to one and then to another, like one unsettled, and still uneasy and unsatisfied; but, in all, *playing the harlot*, worshipping false gods, which is spiritual whoredom, and was commonly accompanied with corporal whoredom too. Note, They that leave God, wander endlessly, and a vagrant lust is inevitable. 2. They made images for themselves, and gave divine honour to them; (v. 26, 27.) not only the common people, but even the kings and princes, who should have restrained the people from doing ill, and the priests and prophets, who should have taught them to do well, were themselves so wretchedly sottish and stupid, and under the power of such a strong delusion, as to say to a stock, "*Thou art my father*; thou art my god, the author of my being, to whom I owe duty, and on whom I have a dependence;" saying to a stone, to an idol made of stone, "*Thou hast begotten me, or brought me forth*; therefore protect me, provide for me, and bring me up." What greater affront could men put upon God who is our Father that has made us? It was a downright disowning of their obligations to him. What greater affront could men put upon themselves and their own reason, than to acknowledge that which is in itself absurd and impossible, and by making stocks and stones their parents, to make themselves no better than stocks and stones? When these were first made the objects of worship, they were supposed to be animated by some celestial power or spirit; but by degrees the thought of this was lost, and so vain did idolaters become in their imagination, even the princes and priests themselves, that the very idol, though made of wood and stone, was supposed to be their father, and adored accordingly. 3. They multiplied these dunghill-deities endlessly; (v. 28.) *According to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah*. When they had forsaken that God who is one, and all-sufficient for all, (1.) They were not satisfied with any gods they had, but still desired more; that idolatry being in this respect of the same nature with covetousness, which is spiritual idolatry, that the more men have the more they would have; which is a plain evidence, that what men make an idol of they find to be insufficient and unsatisfying, and that it cannot make the *comers thereunto perfect*. (2.) They could not agree in the same god; having left the Centre of unity, they fell into endless discord; one city fancied one deity, and another another, and each was anxious to have one of its own, to be near them, and to take special care of them. Thus did they in vain seek that in many gods, which is to be found in one God only.

II. The proof of this; no witnesses need be called, it is proved by the notorious evidence of the facts.

1. They went about to deny it, and were ready to plead *Not guilty*. They pretended that they would acquit themselves from this guilt, *they washed themselves with nitre*, and *took much soap*, offered many things in excuse and extenuation of it, v. 22. They pretended that they did not worship these as gods, but as demons, and mediators between the immortal God and mortal men; or, that it was not divine honour that they gave them, but civil respect; that they sought to evade the convictions of God's word, and to screen themselves from the dread of his wrath. Nay, some of them had the impudence to deny the thing itself; they said, *I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim*, v. 23. Because it was done secretly, and industriously concealed, (Ezek. viii. 12.) they thought it could never be

proved upon them, and they had front enough to deny it. In this, as in other things, their way was like that of the *adulterous woman*, that says, *I have done no wickedness*, Prov. xxx. 20.

2. Notwithstanding all their evasions, they are convicted of it, and found guilty; "*How canst thou deny the fact, and say, I have not gone after Baalim?*" How canst thou deny the fault, and say, *I am not polluted?* The prophet speaks with wonder at their impudence; "*How canst thou put on a face to say so, when it is certain?*" (1.) "God's omniscience is a witness against thee. *Thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God*; it is laid up and hidden, to be produced against thee in the day of judgment; *sealed up among his treasures*," Deut. xxxii. 34. Job xxi. 19. Hos. xiii. 12. "*It is imprinted deep, and stained before me*;" so some read it. "*Though thou endeavour to wash it out, as murderers to get the stain of the blood of the person slain out of their clothes, yet it will never be got out*;" God's eye is upon it, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth. (2.) "*Thine own conscience is a witness against thee. See thy way in the valley*;" (they had worshipped idols, not only on the high hills, but in the valleys, (Isa. lvii. 5, 6.) in the valley over against Beth-peor, (so some,) where they worshipped Baal-peor; (Deut. xxxiv. 6. Numb. xxv. 3.) as if the prophet looked as far back as the *iniquity of Peor*; but if it mean any particular valley, surely it is the valley of the son of Hinnom, for that was the place where they sacrificed their children to Moloch, and which therefore witnessed against them more than any other; "*look into that valley, and thou canst not but know what thou hast done*."

III. The aggravations of this sin with which they are charged, which speak it exceeding sinful.

1. God had done great things for them, and yet they revolted from him, and rebelled against him; (v. 20.) *Of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands*; this refers to the bringing of them out of the land of Egypt, and the house of bondage, which they would not remember, (v. 6.) but God did; for when he told them that they should have no other gods before him, he prefixed this as a reason, *I am the Lord thy God that brought thee out of the land of Egypt*! These bonds of theirs, which God had loosed, should have bound them for ever to him; but they had ungratefully broken the bonds of duty to that God who had broken the bonds of their slavery.

2. They had promised fair, but had not made good their promise; "*Thou saidst, I will not transgress*; then when the mercy of thy deliverance was fresh, thou wast so sensible of it, that thou wast willing to lay thyself under the most sacred ties to continue faithful to thy God, and never to forsake him." Then they said, *Nay but we will serve the Lord*, Josh. xxiv. 21. How often have we said that we would not transgress, we would not offend any more, and yet we have started aside, like a deceitful bow, and repeated and multiplied our transgressions!

3. They had wretchedly degenerated from what they were when God first formed them into a people; (v. 21.) *I had planted thee a noble vine*. The constitution of their government both in church and state was excellent, their laws righteous, and all the ordinances instructive, and very significant; and a generation of good men there was among them when they first settled in Canaan; *Israel served the Lord*, and kept close to him, *all the days of Joshua, and the elders that out-lived Joshua*; (Josh. xxiv. 31.) they were then *wholly a right seed*, likely to replenish the vineyard they were planted in with choice vines; but it proved otherwise; the very next generation *knew not the Lord, nor the works which he had done*, (Judg. ii. 10.) and so they were worse

and worse till they became *the degenerate plants of a strange vine*; they were now the reverse of what they were at first; their constitution was quite broken, and there was nothing in them of that good which one might have expected from a people so happily formed, nothing of the purity and piety of their ancestors. *Their vine is as the vine of Sodom*; Deut. xxxii. 32. This may fitly be applied to the nature of man; it was planted by its great Author *a noble vine, a right seed*; (God made men upright,) but it is so universally corrupt, that it is become *the degenerate plant of a strange vine, that bears gall and wormwood*, and it is so to God, it is highly distasteful and offensive to him.

4. They were violent and eager in the pursuit of their idolatries, doted on their idols, and were fond of new ones, and they would not be restrained from them neither by the word of God, nor by his providences; so strong was the *impetus* with which they were carried out after this sin. They are here compared to a *swift dromedary traversing her ways*, a female of that species of creatures hunting about for a male, (v. 23.) and, to the same purport, a *wild ass used to the wilderness*, (v. 24.) not tamed by labour, and therefore very wanton, *snuffing up the wind at her pleasure* when she comes near the heass, and on such an occasion *who can turn her away?* Who can hinder her from that which she lusts after? *They that seek her then, will not weary themselves for her*, for they know it is to no purpose; but will have a little patience till she is big with young, till that month comes which is the last of the *months that she fulfils*, (Job xxxix. 2.) when she is heavy and unwieldy, and then *they shall find her*, and she cannot outrun them. Note, (1.) Eager lust is a brutish thing, and those that will not be turned away from the gratifying and indulging of it by reason and conscience and honour, are to be reckoned as brute beasts and no better; such as were born, and still are, *like the wild ass's colt*, let them not be looked upon as rational creatures. (2.) Idolatry is strangely intoxicating, and those that are addicted to it will with great difficulty be cured of it. That lust is as headstrong as any other. (3.) There are some so violently set upon the prosecution of their lusts, that it is to no purpose to attempt to give check to them: they that do it, weary themselves in vain. *Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone*. (4.) The time will come when the most fierce will be tamed, and the most wanton will be manageable; when distress and anguish come upon them, then their ears will be open to discipline, that is *the month in which you may find them*, Ps. cxli. 5, 6.

5. They were obstinate in their sin, and, as they could not be restrained, so they would not be reformed, v. 25. Here is, (1.) Fair warning given them of the ruin that this wicked course of life would certainly bring them to at last, with a caution therefore not to persist in it, but to break off from it; he would certainly bring them into a miserable captivity, when their feet should be unshod, and they should be forced to travel barefoot, and when they would be denied fair water by their oppressors, so that their throat should be dried with thirst; this will be in the end hereof. They that affect strange gods, and strange ways of worship, will justly be made prisoners to a strange king in a strange land. Take up in time therefore; thy running after thy idols will run the *shoes off thy feet*, and thy panting after them will bring thy throat to thirst; *withhold therefore thy foot* from these violent pursuits, and thy throat from these violent desires. One would think that it should effectually check us in the career, to consider what it will bring us to at last. (2.) Their rejecting of this fair warning; they said to those that would have persuaded them to repent and reform, *"There is no hope, no, never expect to*

work upon us, or prevail with us to cast away our idols, for we have loved strangers, and after them we will go; we are resolved we will, and therefore trouble not yourselves or us any more with your admonitions, it is to no purpose. There is no hope that we should ever break the corrupt habit and disposition we have got, and therefore we may as well yield to it as go about to get the mastery of it." Note, Their case is very miserable, who have brought themselves to such a pass, that their corruptions triumph over their convictions; they knew they should reform, but own they cannot, and therefore resolve they will not. But as we must not despair of the mercy of God, but believe that sufficient for the pardon of our sins, though ever so heinous, if we repent, and sue for that mercy, so neither must we despair of the grace of God, but believe that able to subdue our corruptions, though ever so strong, if we pray for and improve that grace. A man must never say, *There is no hope*, as long as he is on this side hell.

6. They had shamed themselves by their sin, in putting confidence in that which would certainly deceive them in the day of their distress, and putting *him* away, that would have helped them; (v. 26—28.) *As the thief is ashamed* when, notwithstanding all his arts and tricks to conceal his theft, he is found, and brought to punishment, *So are the house of Israel ashamed*, not with a penitent shame for the sin they had been guilty of, but with a penal shame for the disappointment they met with in that sin. They will be ashamed when they find,

(1.) That they are forced to *cry to the God* whom they had *put contempt upon*. In their prosperity they had turned the back to God, and not the face; they had slighted him, acted as if they had forgotten him, or did what they could to forget him, would not look toward him, but looked another way; they went from him as fast and as far as they could; but in the time of their trouble they will find no satisfaction but in applying themselves to him; then *they will say, Arise, and save us*. Their fathers had many a time taken this shame to themselves, (Judg. iii. 9.—iv. 3.—x. 10.) yet they would not be persuaded to cleave to God, that they might have come to him in their trouble with the more confidence.

(2.) That they have no relief from the gods they have made their court to. They will be ashamed when they perceive that the gods they have made *cannot* serve them, and that the God who made them *will not* serve them. To bring them to this shame, if so be they might thereby be brought to penitence, they are here sent to the *gods whom they served*, as Judg. x. 14. They cried to God, *Arise, and save us*; God says of the idols, *"Let them arise, and save thee*, for thou hast no reason to expect that I should. Let them arise, if they can, from the places where they are fixed; let them try whether they can save thee: but thou wilt be ashamed when thou findest that they can do thee no good, for though thou hadst a god for every city, yet *thy cities are burnt without inhabitant*," v. 15. Thus it is the folly of sinners to please themselves with that which will certainly be their grief, and pride themselves in that which will certainly be their shame.

29. Wherefore will ye plead with me? ye all have transgressed against me, saith the LORD. 30. In vain have I smitten your children: they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion. 31. O generation, see ye the word of the LORD: Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? Wherefore say my people, We are lords; we

will come no more unto thee? 32. Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number. 33. Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways. 34. Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these. 35. Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me: behold I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned. 36. Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria. 37. "Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thy hands upon thy head: for the LORD hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.

The prophet here goes on in the same strain, aiming to bring a sinful people to repentance, that their destruction might be prevented.

1. He avers the truth of the charge; it was evident beyond contradiction, it was the greatest absurdity imaginable in them to think of denying it; (v. 29.) "*Wherefore will you plead with me, and put me upon the proof of it, or wherefore will you go about to plead any thing in excuse of the crime, or to obtain a mitigation of the sentence? Your plea will certainly be overruled, and judgment given against you: you know you have all transgressed, one as well as another; why then do you quarrel with me for contending with you?*"

2. He aggravates it from the consideration both of their incorrigibleness and of their ingratitude.

(1.) They had been wrought upon by the *judgments of God* which they had been under; (v. 30.) *In vain have I smitten your children, the children or people of Judah.* They had been under divine rebukes of many kinds. God therein designed to bring them to repentance, but it was in vain, they did not answer God's end in afflicting them; their consciences were not awakened, nor their hearts softened and humbled, nor were they driven to seek unto God, *they received no instruction by the correction*, were not made the better by it; and it is a great loss thus to lose an affliction; *they did not receive*, they did not submit to, or comply with, the correction, but their hearts fretted against the Lord, and so they were *smitten in vain*. Even the *children, the young people*, among them, (so it may be taken,) were *smitten in vain*; they were so soon prejudiced against repentance, that they were as untractable as the *old ones* that had been long accustomed to do evil.

(2.) They had not been wrought upon by the *word of God*, which he had sent them in the mouth of his servants the prophets, nay, they had killed the messengers for the sake of the message; *Your own sword has devoured your prophets like a destroying lion*; you have put them to death for their faithfulness, with as much rage and fury, and with as much greediness and pleasure, as a lion devours his prey. The prophets, who were their greatest blessings, were treated by them as if they had been the plagues of their generation, and this was their measure-filling sin, (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.) *they killed their own prophets*, 1 Thess. ii. 15.

(3.) They had not been wrought upon by the

favours God had bestowed upon them; (v. 31.) "*O generation,*" (he does not call them, as he might, *O faithless and perverse generation, O generation of upstarts*, but speaks gently, *O ye men of this generation*;) "*see ye the word of the Lord, do not only hear it, but consider it diligently, apply your minds closely to it.*" As we are bid to *hear the rod*, (Micah vi. 9.) for that has its voice, so are we bid to *see the word*, for that has its *visions*, its *views*. It intimates, that what is here said is plain and undeniable; you may see it to be very evident; it is written as with a sun-beam, so that he that runs may read it; *Have I been a wilderness to Israel, a land of darkness?* Note, None of those who have had any dealings with God ever had reason to complain of him as a *wilderness*, or a *land of darkness*. He has blessed us with the *fruits of the earth*, and therefore we cannot say that he has been a *wilderness* to us, a dry and barren land, that (as Mr. Gataker expresses it) he has held us to *hard meat*, as cattle fed upon the common; no, his sheep have been led into *green pastures*. He has also blessed us with the *lights of heaven*, and has not withheld them, so that we cannot say, He has been to us a *land of darkness*. He has caused his *sun to shine*, as well as his *rain to fall*, upon the evil and unthankful. Or, the meaning is, in general, that the service of God has not been to any either as an unpleasant or an unprofitable service. God sometimes has led his people *through a wilderness*, and a *land of darkness*, but he himself was then to them all that which they needed, he so fed them with *manna*, and led them by a *pillar of fire*, that it was to them a fruitful field and a land of light. The world is, to those who make it their home and their portion, a *wilderness*, and a *land of darkness*, vanity and vexation of spirit; but those that dwell in God, have the *lines fallen to them in pleasant places*.

(4.) Instead of being wrought upon by these, they were grown intolerably insolent and imperious. They say, *We are lords, we will come no more unto thee*. Now that they were become a potent kingdom, or thought themselves such, they set up for themselves, and shook off their dependence upon God. This is the language of presumptuous sinners, and it is not only very impious and profane, but very unreasonable and foolish. [1.] It is absurd for us, who are *subjects*, to say, *We are lords*, (that is, *rulers*;) and we will come no more to God to receive commands from him; for as he is King of old, so he is King for ever, and we can never pretend to be from under his authority. [2.] It is absurd for us, who are *beggars*, to say, *We are lords*, that is, *We are rich*, and we will come no more to God, to receive favours from him, as if we could live without him, and need not to be beholden to him. God justly takes it ill, when those to whom he has been a bountiful Benefactor, care not either for hearing from him or speaking to him.

3. He lays the blame of all their wickedness upon their forgetting God; (v. 32.) *They have forgotten me*; they have industriously banished the thoughts of God out of their minds, justified those thoughts cut with thoughts of their idols, and avoided all these things that would put them in mind of God. (1.) Though they were *his own people*, in covenant with him, and professing relation to him, and had the tokens of his presence in the midst of them, and of his favour to them, yet they forgot him. (2.) They had long neglected him, *days without number*, time out of mind, as we say. They had not for a great while entertained any serious thoughts of him; so that they seem quite to have forgotten him, and resolved never to remember him again. How many days of our lives have passed without suitable remembrance of God? Who can number these empty days? (3.) They had not had such a regard and af

fection to him, as young ladies generally have to their fine clothes; *Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?* No, their hearts are upon them, they value them so much, and themselves upon them, that they are ever and anon thinking and speaking of them; when they are to appear in public, they do not forget any of *their ornaments*, but put every one in its place, as they are described, Isa. iii. 18, &c. And yet my people have *forgot*ten me. It is sad that any should be more in love with their fine clothes than with their God; and should rather leave their religion behind them, or part with that, than leave any of their ornaments behind them, or part with them. Is not God our Ornament? Is he not a *Crown of glory*, and a *Diamond of beauty*, to his people? Did we look upon him to be so, and upon our religion as an *ornament of grace to our head*, and *chains about our neck*, (Prov. i. 9.) we should be as mindful of them as ever any *maid* was of *her ornaments*, or a *bride* of *her attire*; we should be as careful to preserve them, and as fond to appear in them.

4. He shows them what a bad influence their sins had had upon others; the sins of God's professing people harden and encourage those about them in their evil ways, especially when they appear forward and ringleaders in sin; (v. 33.) *Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love?* There is an allusion here to the practice of lewd women who strive to recommend themselves by their ogling looks and gay dress, as Jezebel, who *painted her face*, and *tired her head*. Thus had they courted their neighbours into sinful confederacies with them, and communion in their idolatries, and had *taught the wicked ones their ways*, their ways of mixing God's institutions with their idolatrous customs and usages, which was a great profanation of that which was sacred, and made the *ways* of their idolatry worse than that of others. Those have a great deal to answer for, who, by their fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, make *wicked ones* more wicked than otherwise they would be.

5. He charges them with the guilt of murder added to the guilt of their idolatry; (v. 34.) *Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls*, the life-blood of the *poor innocents*, which cried to heaven, and for which God was now *making inquisition*. The reference is to the children that were offered in sacrifice to Moloch; or, it may be taken more generally for all the *innocent blood* which Manasseh shed, and with which he had *filled Jerusalem*, (2 Kings xxi. 16.) the *righteous blood*, especially the blood of the prophets and others that witnessed against their impieties. This blood was found *not by secret search*, not *by digging*, (so the word is,) but *upon all these* it was above ground. This intimates that the guilt of this kind, which they had contracted, was *certain and evident*, not doubtful, or which would bear a dispute; and that it was *avowed and barefaced*, and which they had not so much sense either of shame or fear as to endeavour to conceal; which was a great aggravation of it.

6. He overrules their plea of *Not guilty*. Though this matter be so plain, yet thou sayest, *Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me*; and again, *Thou sayest I have not sinned*, (v. 35.) therefore *I will plead with thee*, and will convince thee of thy mistake. Because they deny the charge, and stand upon their own justification, therefore God will *join issue* with them, and *plead with them*, both by his word and by his rod. Those shall be made to know how much they deceived themselves. (1.) Who say that they have *not offended God*, that they are *innocent*, though they have been guilty of the grossest enormities. (2.) Who expect that God will be reconciled to them, though they do not repent and reform. They own that they had

been under the tokens of God's anger, but they think that it was *causeless*, and that they by pleading innocency had proved it to be so, and therefore they conclude that God will immediately let fall his action, and *his anger shall be turned from them*. This is very provoking, and God will *plead with them*, and convince them that his anger is just, for they have sinned and he will never cease his controversy, till they, instead of justifying themselves thus, humble, and judge, and condemn themselves.

7. He upbraids them with the shameful disappointments they met with, in making creatures their confidence, while they made God their Enemy, v. 36, 37. It was a piece of spiritual idolatry they were often guilty of, that they trusted in *an arm of flesh*, and their hearts therein *departed from the Lord*. Now here he shows them the folly of it. (1.) They were restless, and unsatisfied in the choice of their confidences; *"Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?"* Doubtless it is because thou meetest not with that in those thou didst confide in, which thou promisedst thyself." Those that make God their Hope, and walk in a continual dependence upon him, need not *gad about to change their way*; for their souls may return to him, and repose in him as their Rest: but they that trust in creatures will be perpetually uneasy, like Noah's dove that found no rest for the sole of her foot. Every thing they trust to fails them, and then they think to change for the better, but they will be still disappointed. They first trusted to Assyria, and when that proved a broken reed, they depended upon Egypt, and that proved no better. Creatures being vanity, they will be *vexation of spirit* to all those that put their confidence in them; they *gad about, seeking rest*, and finding none. (2.) They were quite disappointed in the confidences they made choice of; the prophet tells them they should be; *Thou shalt be ashamed of Egypt*, which thou now trustest in, as formerly *thou wast of Assyria, who distressed them, and helped them not*, 2 Chron. xxviii. 20. The Jews were a peculiar people in their profession of religion, and for that reason none of the neighbouring nations cared for them, nor could heartily love them; and yet the Jews were still courting them and confiding in them, and were well enough served when deceived by them. See what will come of it; (v. 37.) *Thou shalt go forth from him*, thine ambassadors or envoys shall return from Egypt *re infecta*—*disappointed*, and therefore *with their hands upon their heads*, lamenting the desperate condition of their people. Or, *Thou shalt go forth from hence*, into captivity in a strange land, *with thine hands upon thine head*, holding it because it aches, (*Ubi dolor, ibi digitus*—*Where the pain is the finger will be applied*) or as people ashamed, for Tamar, in the height of her confusion, *laid her hand on her head*, 2 Sam. xiii. 19. "And Egypt, that thou reliest on, shall not be able to prevent it, or to rescue thee out of captivity." They that will not *lay their hand on their heart* in godly sorrow, which works life, shall be made to *lay their hand on their head* in the sorrow of the world, which works death. And no wonder that Egypt cannot help them, when God *will not*. If the Lord do not help thee, whence should I? The Egyptians are broken reeds, for *the Lord has rejected thy confidences*; he will not make use of them for thy relief, will neither so far honour them, nor so far give countenance to thy confidence in them, as to appoint them to be the instruments of any good to thee, and therefore *thou shalt not prosper in them*; they shall not stand thee in thy stead, nor give thee any satisfaction. *As there is no counsel or wisdom that can prevail against the Lord*, so there is none that can prevail with it him. Some read it, *The Lord has rejected thee for thy confidences*; because thou hast dealt so unfaithfully with

him as to trust in their creatures, nay, in his enemies, when thou shouldst have trusted in him only, he has abandoned thee to thy destruction from which thou thoughtest thus to have sheltered thyself; and then thou *canst not prosper*, for none ever either hardened himself against God, or estranged himself from God, and prospered.

CHAP. III.

The foregoing chapter was wholly taken up with reproofs, and threatenings against the people of God, for their apostacies from him; but in this chapter, gracious invitations and encouragements are given them to return and repent, notwithstanding the multitude and greatness of their provocations, which are here aggravated, to magnify the mercy of God, and to show that as sin abounded grace did much more abound. Here, I. It is further showed how bad they had been, and how well they deserved to be quite abandoned, and yet how ready God was to receive them into his favour, upon their repentance, v. 1. . . 5. II. The impenitence of Judah, and their persisting in sin, are aggravated from the judgments of God upon Israel, which they should have taken warning by, v. 6. . . 14. III. Great encouragements are given to these backsliders to return and repent; and promises made of great mercy which God had in store for them, and which he should prepare them for by bringing them home to himself, v. 12. . . 19. IV. The charge renewed against them for their apostacy from God, and the invitation repeated to return and repent, to which are here added the words that are put in their mouth, which they should make use of in their return to God, v. 20. . . 25.

1. **THEY** say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted: but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD. 2. Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with: in the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms, and with thy wickedness. 3. Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed. 4. Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth? 5. Will he reserve his anger for ever? will he keep it to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst.

These verses some make to belong to the sermon in the foregoing chapter, and they open a door of hope to those who receive the conviction of the reproofs we had; therefore God *wounds*, that he may *heal*. Now observe here,

I. How basely this people had forsaken God, and gone a whoring from him. The charge runs very high here:

1. They had multiplied their idols, and their idolatries. To have admitted one strange god among them had been bad enough, but they were insatiable in their lustings after false worship; *Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers*, v. 1. She was become a common prostitute to idols; not a foolish deity was set up in all the neighbourhood, but the Jews would have it quickly. Where was a *high place* in the country, but they had an idol in it? v. 2. Next, In repentance, it is good to make sorrowful

reflections upon the particular acts of sin we have been guilty of, and the several places and companies where it has been committed, that we may give glory to God, and take shame to ourselves, by a particular confession of it.

2. They had sought opportunity for their idolatries, and had sent about to inquire for new gods; *In the high ways hast thou sat for them*, as Tamar when she put on the disguise of a harlot, (Gen. xxxviii. 14.) and as the *foolish woman*, that sits to call passengers, who go right on their way, Prov. ix. 14, 15. *As the Arabian in the wilderness: the Arabian huckster*, (so some,) that courts customers, or waits for the merchants to get a good bargain and forestall the market; or, the *Arabian thief*, (so others,) that watches for his prey; so had they waited either to court new gods to come among them, the newer the better, and the more fond they were of them, or to court others to join with them in the idolatries: they were not only sinners, but Satans; not only traitors themselves, but tempters to others.

3. They were grown very impudent in sin. They not only polluted themselves, but *their land*, with their *whoredoms* and with their *wickedness*; (v. 2.) for it was universal and unpunished, and so became a national sin. And yet, (v. 3.) *"Thou hadst a whore's forehead, a brazen face of thy own. Thou refusedst to be ashamed; thou didst enough to shame thee for ever, and yet wouldest not take shame to thyself."* Blushing is the colour of virtue, or at least a relic of it; but those that are *past shame*, (we say,) are *past hope*. Those that have an *adulterer's heart*, if they indulge that, will come at length to have a *whore's forehead*, void of all shame and modesty.

4. They abounded in all manner of sin. They polluted the land not only with their *whoredoms*, their idolatries, but with their *wickedness*, or malice, (v. 2.) sins against the second table; for how can we think that those should be true to their neighbour, that are false to their God? "Nay, (v. 5.) *thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst*; and wouldest have spoken and done worse, if thou hadst known how; thy will was to do it, but thou lackedst opportunity." Note, Those are wicked indeed, that sin to the utmost of their power; that never refuse to comply with a temptation because they *should not*, but because they *cannot*.

II. How gently God had corrected them for their sins. Instead of raining fire and brimstone upon them, because, like Sodom, they had *avowed their sin*, and had gone after strange gods, as Sodom after strange flesh, he only *withheld the showers from them*, and that only one part of the year, *there has been no latter rain*; which might serve as an intimation to them of their continual dependence upon God; when they had the *former rain*, that was no security to them for the *latter*, but they must still look up to God: but it had not this effect.

III. How justly God might have abandoned them utterly, and refused ever to receive them again, though they should return; this would have been but according to the known rule of divorces, v. 1. *They say*, it is an adjudged case, nay, it is a case in which the law is very express, and it is what every body knows and speaks of, (Deut. xxiv. 4.) that if a woman be once put away for whoredom, and be joined to *another man*, her first husband shall never, upon any pretence whatsoever, take her again to be his wife; such playing fast and loose with the marriage-bond would be a horrid profanation of that ordinance, and would *greatly pollute* that land. Observe what the law says in this case; *They say*, every one will say, and subscribe to the equity of the law in it: for every man finds something in himself, that forbids him to entertain one that is *another*

man's. And in like manner they had reason to expect that God should refuse ever to take them to be his people again, who had not only been joined to one strange god, but had *played the harlot with many lovers*. If we had to do with a man like ourselves, after such provocations as we have been guilty of, he would have been *implacable*, and we might have despaired of his being reconciled to us.

IV. How graciously he not only invites them, but directs them, to return to him.

1. He encourages them to hope that they should find favour with him, upon their repentance; "Though thou hast been bad, yet *return again to me*," v. 1. This implies a promise that he will receive them; "Return, and thou shalt be welcome." God has not tied himself by the laws which he made, nor has he the peevish resentment that men have; he will be more kind to Israel, for the sake of his covenant with them, than ever any injured husband was to an adulterous wife; for in receiving penitents, as much as in any thing, he is *God, and not man*.

2. He therefore kindly expects that they will repent, and return to him, and he directs them what to say to him; (v. 4.) "*Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me? Wilt not thou, who hast been in such relation to me, and on whom I have laid such obligations, wilt not thou cry to me? Though thou hast gone a whoring from me, yet, when thou findest the folly of it, surely thou wilt think of returning to me; now at least, now at last, in this thy day. Wilt thou not at this time, nay, wilt thou not from this time and forward, cry unto me? Whatever thou hast said or done hitherto, wilt thou not from this time apply thyself to me? From this time of conviction and correction; now that thou hast been made to see thy sins, (v. 2.) and to smart for them, (v. 3.) wilt thou not now forsake them, and return to me, saying, I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now?*" Hos. ii. 7. Or, "*From this time that thou hast had so kind an invitation to return, and assurance that thou shalt be well received; wilt not this grace of God overcome thee? Now that pardon is proclaimed, wilt thou not come in, and take the benefit of it? Surely thou wilt.*"

(1.) He expects they will *claim relation to God*, as theirs; *Wilt thou not cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?* [1.] They will surely come toward him *as a Father*, to beg his pardon for their undutiful conduct to him, (*Father, I have sinned*;) and will hope to find in him the tender compassions of a Father towards a returning prodigal. They will come to him as a Father, to whom they will make their complaints, and in whom they will put their confidence for relief and succour. They will now own him as their Father, and themselves *fatherless* without him; and therefore hoping to *find mercy* with him, as those penitents, Hos. xiv. 3. [2.] They will come to him as the *Guide of their youth*, as their Husband; for so that relation is described, Mal. ii. 14. "Though thou hast gone after *many lovers*, surely thou wilt at length remember the love of thine espousals, and return to the *husband of thy youth*." Or, it may be taken more generally; as, *my Father, thou art the Guide of my youth*. Youth needs a guide. In our return to God, we must thankfully *remember* that he *was the Guide of our youth*, in the way of comfort; and we must faithfully covenant that he shall be *our Guide* from henceforward in the way of duty, and that we will follow his guidance, and give up ourselves entirely to it; that in all doubtful cases we will be determined by our religion.

(2.) He expects they will *appeal to the mercy of God*, and crave the benefit of that mercy, (v. 5.) that they will reason thus with themselves for their

encouragement to return to him; "*Will he reserve his anger for ever? Surely he will not, for he has proclaimed his name gracious and merciful.*" Repenting sinners may encourage themselves with this, that though God chide, he will not always chide; though he be angry, he will not keep his anger to the end, but that *though he cause grief, he will have compassion*, and may thus plead for reconciliation. Some understand this as describing their hypocrisy, and the impudence of it; "Though thou hast a *whore's forehead*, (v. 3.) and art still *doing evil as thou canst*, (v. 5.) yet art thou not ever and anon *crying to me, My Father?*" Even when they were most addicted to idols, they pretended a regard to God and his service, and kept up the forms of godliness and devotion. It is a shameful thing for men thus to call God *Father*, and yet to do the *works of the devil*; (as the Jews, John viii. 44.) to call him the *Guide of their youth*, and yet give up themselves to *walk after the flesh*; and to flatter themselves with the expectation that *his anger shall have an end*, while they are continually *treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath*.

6. The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen *that* which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain, and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. 7. And I said, after she had done all these *things*, Turn thou unto me: but she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw *it*. 8. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery, I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. 9. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks. 10. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD. 11. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.

The date of this sermon must be observed, in order to the right understanding of it; it was in the *days of Josiah*, who set on foot a blessed work of reformation, in which he was hearty, but the people were not sincere in their compliance with it; to reprove them for that, and warn them of the consequences of their hypocrisy, is the scope of that which God here said to the prophet, and which he *delivered to them*. The case of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah is here compared, the *ten tribes* that revolted from the throne of David and the temple of Jerusalem, and the *two tribes* that adhered to both. The distinct history of those two kingdoms we have in the two books of the Kings, and here we have an abstract of both, as far as relates to this matter.

1. Here is a short account of Israel, the ten tribes. Perhaps the prophet had been just reading the history of that kingdom, when God came to him, and said, *Hast thou seen what backsliding Israel has done?* v. 6. For he could not see it otherwise than in history, they having been carried into captivity

long before he was born: but what we read in the histories of scripture should instruct us and affect us, as if we ourselves had been eye-witnesses of it. She is called *backsliding Israel*, because that kingdom was first founded in an apostasy from the divine institutions, both in church and state. Now he had *seen* concerning them,

(1.) That they were wretchedly addicted to idolatry; they had *played the harlot upon every high mountain, and under every green tree*; (v. 6.) they had worshipped other gods in their high places an groves; and no marvel, when from the first they had worshipped God by the images of the *golden calves* at Dan and Bethel. The way of idolatry is down-hill: they that are in love with *images*, and will *have them*, soon become in love with *other gods*, and will *have them* too; for how should they stick at the breach of the first commandment, who make no conscience of the second?

(2.) That God by his prophets had invited and encouraged them to repent and reform; (v. 7.) *After she had done all these things*, for which she might justly have been abandoned, yet *I said* unto her, *Turn thou unto me*, and I will receive thee." Though they had forsaken both the house of David, and the house of Aaron, who both had their authority *jure divino*—from God, without dispute, yet God sent his prophets among them, to call them to *return to him*, to the worship of him only, not insisting so much as one would have expected upon their return to the house of David, but pressing their return to the house of Aaron: we read not that Elijah, that great reformer, ever mentioned their return to the house of David, while he was anxious for their return to the faithful service of the true God according as they had it among them. It is serious piety that God stands upon more than even *his own* rituals.

(3.) That, notwithstanding this, they had persisted in their idolatries; *but she returned not*, and God *saw it*; he took notice of it, and was much displeased with it, v. 7, 8. Note, God keeps account, whether we do or no, how often he has called to us to turn to him, and we have refused.

(4.) That he had therefore cast them off, and given them up into the hands of their enemies; (v. 8.) *When I saw* (so it may be read) *that for all the actions wherein she had committed adultery, I must dismiss her, I gave her a bill of divorce*. God divorced them when he threw them out of his protection, and left them an easy prey to any that would lay hands on them; when he scattered all their synagogues and schools of the prophets, and excluded them from laying any further claim to the covenant made with their fathers. Note, Those will justly be divorced from God, that join themselves to such as are rivals with him. For proof of this, go, and see what God did to Israel.

2. Let us now see what was the case of Judah, the kingdom of the two tribes; she is called *thy treacherous sister Judah*; a sister, because descended from the same common stock, Abraham and Jacob; but as Israel had the character of a *backslider*, so Judah is called *treacherous*, because, though she professed to keep close to God when Israel was backslidden, (she adhered to the kings and priests that were of God's own appointing, and did not withdraw from her allegiance, so that it was expected she should deal faithfully,) yet she proved treacherous and false, and unfaithful to her professions and promises. Note, The treachery of those who pretend to cleave to God, will be reckoned for, as well as the apostasy of those who openly revolt from him. Judah saw what Israel did, and what came of it, and should have taken warning: Israel's captivity was intended for Judah's admonition, but it had not the designed effect. Judah feared not,

but thought herself safe because she had Levites to be her priests, and sons of David to be her kings. Note, It is an argument of great stupidity and security, when we are not awakened to a holy fear by the judgments of God upon others. It is here charged on Judah,

(1.) That when they had a wicked king that debauched them, they heartily concurred with him in his debaucheries. Judah was forward enough to *play the harlot*, to worship any idol that was introduced among them, and to join in any idolatrous usage; so that *through the lightness* (or, as some read it, the *vileness and baseness*) of her *whoredom*, or, as the margin reads it, by the fame and report of her whoredom, her *notorious* whoredom, for which she was become infamous, she *defiled the land*, and made it an abomination to God; for she *committed adultery with stones and stocks*, with the basest idols, those made of wood and stone. In the reigns of Manasseh and Amon, when they were disposed to idolatry, the people were so too, and all the country was corrupted with it, and none feared the ruin which Israel by this means had brought upon themselves.

(2.) That when they had a good king that reformed them, they did not heartily concur with him in the reformation: that was the present case. God tried whether they would be good in a good reign, but the evil disposition was still the same; *They returned not to me with their whole heart, but feignedly*, v. 10. Josiah went further in destroying idolatry than the best of his predecessors had done, and for his own part he *turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul*; so it is said of him, 2 Kings xxiii. 25. The people were forced to an external compliance with him, and joined with him in keeping a very solemn passover, and in renewing their covenants with God; (2 Chron. xxxiv. 32—xxxv. 17.) but they were not sincere in it, nor were their hearts right with God. For this reason God at that very time said, *I will remove Judah out of my sight, as I removed Israel*, (2 Kings xxiii. 27.) because Judah was not removed from their sin by the sight of Israel's removal from their land. Hypocritical and ineffectual reformations bode ill to a people. We deceive ourselves, if we think to deceive God by a feigned return to him; I know no religion without sincerity.

3. The case of these sister-kingdoms is compared, and judgment given upon the comparison, that of the two Judah was the worse; (v. 11.) *Israel has justified herself more than Judah*, she is not so bad as Judah is. This comparative justification will stand Israel in little stead; what will it avail us to say, *We are not so bad as others*, when yet we are not really good ourselves? But it will serve as an aggravation of the sin of Judah, which was in two respects worse than that of Israel. (1.) More was expected from Judah than from Israel; so that Judah dealt treacherously, they vilified a more sacred profession, and falsified a more solemn promise, than Israel did. (2.) Judah might have taken warning by the ruin of Israel for their idolatry, and would not. God's judgments upon others, if they be not means of our reformation, will help to aggravate our destruction. The prophet Ezekiel (ch. xxiii. 11.) makes the same comparison between Jerusalem and Samaria, that this prophet here makes between Judah and Israel, nay, and (Ezek. xvi. 48.) between Jerusalem and Sodom, and Jerusalem is made the worst of the three.

12. Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am mer-

ciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever. 13. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD. 14. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: 15. And I will give you pastors according to my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. 16. And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD; neither shall it come to mind, neither shall they remember it, neither shall they visit it, neither shall that be done any more. 17. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. 18. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers. 19. But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? And I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.

Here is a great deal of gospel in these verses, both that which was always gospel, God's readiness to pardon sin, and to receive and entertain returning, repenting sinners, and those blessings which were in a special manner reserved for gospel-times, the forming and founding of the gospel-church, by bringing into it the *children of God* that were scattered abroad, the superseding of the ceremonial law, and the uniting of Jews and Gentiles, typified by the uniting of Israel and Judah in their return out of captivity.

The prophet is directed to *proclaim these words toward the north*, for they are to call to backsliding Israel, the ten tribes that were carried captive into Assyria, which lay north from Jerusalem. That way he must look, to show that God had not forgotten them, though their brethren had, and to upbraid the men of Judah with their obstinacy in refusing to answer the calls given them. One might as well call to them who lay many hundred miles off in the land of the north; they will as soon hear as these unbelieving and disobedient people; *backsliding Israel* will sooner accept of mercy, and have the benefit of it, than *treacherous Judah*. And perhaps the proclaiming of these words toward the north, looks as far forward as the *preaching of repentance and remission of sins unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*, Luke xxiv. 47. A call to Israel in the land of the north, is a call to others in that land, even as many as belong to the election of grace; when it was suspected that Christ would

go to the dispersed Jews among the Gentiles, it was concluded that he would *teach the Gentiles*, John vii. 35. So here,

I. There is an invitation given to *backsliding Israel*, and in them to the backsliding Gentiles, to *return unto God*, the God from whom they had revolted; (v. 12.) *Return, thou backsliding Israel*. And again, (v. 14.) "*Turn, O backsliding children, repent of your backslidings, return to your allegiance; come back to that good way which you have missed, and out of which you have turned aside.*" Pursuant to this invitation, 1. They are encouraged to return; *Repent, and be converted, and your sins shall be blotted out*, Acts iii. 19. You have incurred God's displeasure, but return to me, and *I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you.*" God's anger is ready to fall upon sinners, as a lion falls on his prey, and there is none to deliver; as a mountain of lead falling on them, to sink them past recovery into the lowest hell. But if they repent it shall be turned away, Isa. xii. 1. *I will not keep mine anger for ever*, but will be reconciled, *for I am merciful*. We that are sinful, were for ever undone, if God were not merciful; but the goodness of his nature encourages us to hope that if we by repentance undo what we have done against him, he will by a pardon unsay what he has said against us. 2. They are directed how to return; (v. 13.) "*Only acknowledge thine iniquity*, own thyself in a fault, and thereby take shame to thyself, and give glory to God." *I will not keep my anger for ever*; (that is a previous promise;) you shall be delivered from that anger of God which is everlasting, from the wrath to come; but upon what terms? Very easy and reasonable ones. *Only acknowledge thy sins; if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive them.* This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners, that the terms of pardon and peace were brought so low, and yet they would not come up to them. *If the prophet had bid them do some great thing, would they not have done it? How much more when he says, Only acknowledge thine iniquity?* 2 Kings v. 13. In confessing sin, (1.) We must own the corruption of our nature; *Acknowledge thine iniquity*; the perverseness and irregularity of thy nature. (2.) We must own our actual sins, "*that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, hast affronted him and offended him.*" (3.) We must own the multitude of our transgressions, "*that thou hast scattered thy ways to the strangers*, run hither and thither in pursuit of thine idols, under every green tree. Wherever thou hast rambled, thou hast left behind thee the marks of thy folly. (4.) We must aggravate our sin from the disobedience that there is in it to the divine law. The sinfulness of sin is the worst thing in it; "*Ye have not obeyed my voice*, acknowledge that, and let that humble you more than any thing else."

II. Here are precious promises made to these backsliding children, if they do return; which were in part fulfilled in the return of the Jews out of their captivity, many that belonged to the ten tribes having perhaps joined themselves to those of the two tribes, in the prospect of their deliverance, and returning with them; but is to have its full accomplishment in the gospel-church, and the gathering together of the *children of God that were scattered abroad* to that. "*Return, for though you are backsliders, yet you are children*; nay, though a treacherous wife, yet a wife, *for I am married to you*, (v. 14.) and will not disown the relation." Thus God remembers his covenant with their fathers, that marriage-covenant, and in consideration of that he *remembers their land*, Lev. xxvi. 42.

1. He promises to gather them together from all places whither they are dispersed and scattered abroad; (John xi. 52.) *I will take you, one of a city,*

and two of a family, or clan; and I will bring you to Zion. All those that by repentance return to their duty, shall return to their former comfort. Observe, (1.) God will graciously receive those that *return to him*, nay, it is he that by his distinguishing grace takes them out from among the rest that persist in their backslidings; if he had left them, they had been undone. (2.) Of the many that have backslidden from God, there are but few, very few in comparison, that return to him, like the gleanings of the vintage; *one of a city, and two of a country*; Christ's flock is a little flock, and *few there be that find the strait gate*. (3.) Of those few, though dispersed, yet not one shall be lost. Though there be but *one in a city*, God will find out that one; he shall not be overlooked in a crowd, but shall be brought safe to Zion, safe to Heaven. The scattered Jews shall be brought to Jerusalem, and those of the ten tribes shall be as welcome there as those of the two. God's chosen, scattered all the world over, shall be brought to the *gospel-church*, that mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, that holy hill on which Christ reigns.

2. He promises to set those over them that shall be every way blessings to them; (v. 15.) *I will give you pastors after my heart*, alluding to the character given of David, when God pitched upon him to be king; (1 Sam. xiii. 14.) *The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart*. Observe, (1.) When a church is gathered it must be governed. *I will bring them to Zion*, not to live as they list, but to be under discipline, not as wild beasts, that range at pleasure, but as sheep that are under the direction of a shepherd. *I will give them pastors*, magistrates and ministers; both are God's ordinance for the support of his kingdom. (2.) It is well with a people when their pastors are *after God's own heart*; such as they should be, such as he would have them be, who shall make his will their rule in all their administrations; and such as endeavour in some measure to conform to his example; who rule for him, and, as they are capable, rule like him. (3.) Those are pastors after God's own heart, who make it their business to feed the flock, not to *feed themselves, and fleece the flocks*, but to do all they can for the good of those that are under their charge; who *feed them with wisdom and understanding*, wisely and understandingly, as David fed them, in the *integrity of his heart*, and by the *skilfulness of his hand*, Ps. lxxviii. 72. Those who are not only pastors, but teachers, must feed them with the word of God, which is wisdom and understanding, which is able to make us wise to salvation.

3. He promises that there should be no more occasion for the *ark of the covenant*, which had been so much the glory of the tabernacle first, and afterward of the temple, and was the token of God's presence with them; that shall be set aside, and there shall be no more inquiry after, nor inquiring of, it; (v. 16.) *When ye be multiplied and increased in the land*, when the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up, which by the accession of the Gentiles will bring into the church a vast increase, (and the days of the Messiah the Jewish masters themselves acknowledge to be here intended,) then *they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord*, they shall have it no more among them to value, or value themselves upon, because they shall have a pure spiritual way of worship set up, in which there shall be no occasion for any of those external ordinances; with the *ark of the covenant* the whole ceremonial law shall be set aside, and all the institutions of it, for Christ, the Truth of all those types, exhibited to us in the word and sacraments of the New Testament, will be to us instead of all. It is very likely (whatever the Jews suggest to the contrary) that *the ark of the covenant* was in the se-

cond temple, being restored by Cyrus with the other vessels of the house of the Lord, Ezra i. 7. But in the gospel-temple Christ is the *Ark*, he is the Propitiatory, or Mercy-seat; and it is the spiritual presence of God in his ordinances that we are now to expect. Many expressions are here used concerning the setting aside of the ark, that it shall not come to mind, that they shall not remember it, that they shall not visit it, that none of these things shall be any more done; for the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, John iv. 24. But this variety of expressions is used, to show that the ceremonies of the law of Moses should be totally and finally abolished, never to be used any more; but that it would be with difficulty that those who had been so long wedded to them should be weaned from them; and that they would not quite let them go till their Holy city and Holy house should both be levelled with the ground.

4. He promises that the gospel-church, here called *Jerusalem*, shall become eminent and conspicuous, v. 17. Two things shall make it famous. (1.) God's special residence and dominion in it. It shall be called, *The throne of the Lord*; the throne of his glory, for that shines forth in the church; the throne of his government, for that also is erected there, there he rules his willing people by his word and Spirit, and brings every thought into obedience to himself. As the gospel got ground, this *throne of the Lord* was set up there where *Satan's seat* had been. It is especially the throne of his grace, for they that by faith come to this Jerusalem, come to *God the Judge of all*, and to *Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant*, Heb. xii. 22, 23. (2.) The accession of the Gentiles to it. *All the nations shall be disciples, and so gathered to the church*, and shall become subjects to that *throne of the Lord* which is there set up, and devoted to the honour of that name of the Lord which is there both manifested and called upon.

5. He promises that there shall be a wonderful reformation wrought in those that are gathered to the church; *They shall not walk any more after the imagination of their evil hearts*. They shall not live as they list, but live by rules; not do according to their own corrupt appetites, but according to the will of God. See what leads in sin, the *imagination of our own evil hearts*; and what sin is, it is *walking after* that imagination, being governed by fancy and humour; and what converting grace does, it takes us off from walking after *our own inventions*, and brings us to be governed by religion and right reason.

6. That Judah and Israel shall be happily united in one body, v. 18. They were so in their return out of captivity, and their settlement again in Canaan; *The house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel*, as being perfectly agreed, and become *one stick in the hand of the Lord*, as Ezekiel also foretold, ch. xxxvii. 16, 17. Both Assyria and Chaldea fell into the hands of Cyrus, and his proclamation extended to all the Jews in all his dominions. And therefore we have reason to think that many of the house of Israel came with those of Judah out of the land of the north; though at first there returned but forty-two thousand (whom we have an account of, Ezra ii.) yet Josephus says, (*Antiq. lib. 11. cap. 4.*) that some few years after, under Darius, Zerubbabel went, and fetched up above four millions of souls, to the land that was given for an inheritance to their fathers. And we never read of such animosities and enmities between Israel and Judah as had been formerly. This happy coalescence between Israel and Judah in Canaan, was a type of the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the gospel-church, when, all enmities being slain, they should become one *sheepfold* under one *shepherd*.

III. Here is some difficulty started, that lies in the way of all this mercy; but an expedient is found to get over it.

1. God asks, *How shall I do this for thee?* Not as if God showed favour with reluctance, as he punishes with a *How shall I give thee up?* Hos. xi. 8, 9. No, though he is slow to anger, he is swift to show mercy. But it intimates that we are utterly unworthy of his favours, that we have no reason to expect them, that there is nothing in us to deserve them, that we can lay no claim to them, and that he contrives how to do it in such a way as may save the honour of his justice and holiness in the government of the world; *means must be devised, that his banished be not for ever expelled from him*, 2 Sam. xiv. 14. How shall I do it? (1.) Even backsliders, if they return and repent, shall be *put among the children*; and who could ever have expected that? *Behold, what manner of love is this!* 1 John iii. 1. How should we, who are so mean and weak, so worthless and unworthy, and so provoking, ever be *put among the children*? (2.) Those whom God puts among the children, to them he will *give the pleasant land*, the land of Canaan, that glory of all lands, *that goodly heritage of the hosts of nations*, which nations and their hosts wish for, and prefer to their own country; or which the hosts of the nations have now got possession of: it was a type of heaven, where there are *pleasures for ever more*; now who could expect a place in that *pleasant land*, that has so often *despised it*, (Ps. cvi. 24.) and is so unworthy of it, and unfit for it? Is this the manner of men?

2. He does himself return answer to this question; *But I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father*. God does himself answer all the objections that are taken from our unworthiness, or they would never be got over. (1.) That he may put returning penitents among the children, he will give them the *Spirit of adoption*, teaching them to cry, *Abba, Father*, Gal. iv. 6. "*Thou shalt call me, My Father*; thou shalt return to me, and resign thyself to me as a *Father*, and that shall recommend thee to my favour." (2.) That he may give them the *pleasant land*, he will *put his fear in their hearts*, that they may never turn from him, but may persevere to the end.

20. Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD. 21. A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God. 22. Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God. 23. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel. 24. For shame hath devoured the labour of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. 25. We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.

Here is,

1. The charge God exhibits against Israel for their treacherous departures from him, v. 20. As

an adulterous wife elopes from her husband, so have they gone a whoring from God. They were joined to God by a marriage covenant, but they broke that covenant, they *dealt treacherously* with God, who had always dealt kindly and faithfully with them. Treacherous dealing with men like ourselves is bad enough, but to *deal treacherously* with God is to *deal treasonably*.

II. Their conviction and confession of the truth of this charge, v. 21. When God reproved them for their apostasy, there were some among them, even such as God would take, and *bring to Zion*, whose voice was heard upon the high places, *weeping and praying*, humbling themselves before the God of their fathers, lamenting their calamities and their sins, the procuring cause of them; for this is that which they lament, for this they bemoan themselves, that *they have perverted their way, and forgotten the Lord their God*. Note, 1. Sin is the *perverting of our way*, it is turning aside to crooked ways, and *perverting that which is right*. 2. *Forgetting the Lord our God* is at the bottom of all sin. If men would remember God, his eye upon them, and their obligation to him, they would not transgress as they do. 3. By sin we *embarrass ourselves*, and bring ourselves into trouble, for that also is the *perverting of our way*, Lam. iii. 9. 4. *Prayers and tears* well become those whose consciences tell them that they have *perverted their way and forgotten their God*. When the *foolishness of man perverts his way*, his heart is apt to *fret against the Lord*, (Prov. xix. 3.) whereas it should be *melted and poured out* before him.

III. The invitation God gives them to return to him; (v. 22.) *Return, ye backsliding children*. He calls them *children*, in tenderness and compassion to them; foolish and froward as children, yet *his sons*; whom though he corrects he will not disinherit; for though they are *refractory children*, (so some render it,) yet they are *children*. God bears with such children, and so must parents. When they are convinced of sin, (v. 21.) and humbled for that, then they are *prepared*, and then they are *invited, to return*; as Christ invites those to him that are *weary and heavy laden*. The promise to those that return is, "*I will heal your backslidings*; I will comfort you under the grief you are in for your backslidings, deliver you out of the troubles you have brought yourselves into by your backslidings, and cure you of your refractoriness, and bent to backslide." God will *heal our backslidings* by his pardoning mercy, his quieting peace, and his renewing grace.

IV. The ready consent they give to this invitation, and their cheerful compliance with it; *Behold, we come unto thee*. This is an echo to God's call; as a voice returned from *broken walls*, so this from *broken hearts*. God says, *Return*; they answer, *Behold, we come*. It is an immediate, speedy answer, without delay, not, "*We will come hereafter*," but, "*We do come now*; we need not take time to consider of it." Not, "*We come toward thee*," but, "*We come to thee*, we will make a *thorough turn* of it." Observe how unanimous they are; *We come, one and all*.

1. They come *devoting* themselves to God as *theirs*; "*Thou art the Lord our God*, we take thee to be ours, we give up ourselves to thee to be thine; whither shall we go but to thee?" It is our sin and folly that we have gone *from thee*. It is very comfortable, in our returns to God after our backsliding, to look up to him as *ours* in covenant.

2. They come *disclaiming* all expectations of relief and succour but from God only; "*In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of the mountains*; we now see our folly in relying upon creature-confidences, and will never so deceive ourselves any more." They worshipped

their idols upon hills and mountains, (v. 6.) and they had a *multitude of idols* upon their mountains, which they had sought unto and put a confidence in; but now they will have no more to do with them. In vain do we look for *any thing* that is good from them, while from God we may look for *every thing* that is good; even *salvation* itself. Therefore,

3. They come depending upon God only as their God; *In the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel*. He is *the Lord*, and he only can save; he can save when all other succours and saviours fail; and he is *our God*, and will in his own way and time work salvation for us. It is very applicable to the great salvation from sin, which Jesus Christ wrought out for us; that is the *salvation of the Lord*, his great salvation.

4. They come *justifying God* in their troubles, and *judging themselves* for their sins, v. 24, 25. (1.) They impute all the calamities they had been under to their idols, which had not only done them no good, but had done them abundance of mischief, all the mischief that had been done them; *Shame*, (the idol, that shameful thing,) *has devoured the labour of our fathers*. Note, [1.] True penitents have learned to call sin *shame*; even the beloved sin, which has been as an *idol* to them, which they have been most *pleased* with and *proud* of, even that they shall call a scandalous thing, shall put contempt upon, and be ashamed of. [2.] True penitents have learned to call sin *death* and ruin, and to charge upon it all the mischiefs they suffer; "It has *devoured* all those good things which our fathers *laboured for*, and left us; we have found *from our youth* that our idolatry has been the destruction of our prosperity." Children often throw away upon their lusts that which *their fathers* took a great deal of *pains for*; and it is well if at length they are brought (as these here) to see the folly of it, and to call those vices their *shame*, which have wasted their estates, and *devoured the labour of their fathers*, which their idols had *devoured, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters*. First, Their idolatries had provoked God to bring these desolating judgments upon them, which had ruined their country and families, and made their estates a prey, and their children captives to the conquering enemy. They had *procured these things to themselves*. Or rather, Secondly, These had been *sacrificed* to their idols, had been *separated unto that shame*; (Hos. ix. 10.) and they had *devoured* them without mercy, they did *eat the fat of their sacrifices*, (Deut. xxxii. 38.) even their human sacrifices. (2.) They take to themselves the shame of their sin and folly; (v. 25.) "*We lie down in our shame*, being unable to bear up under it, *our confusion covers us*, both our *penal* and our *penitential* shame. Sin has laid us under such rebukes of God's providence, and such reproaches of our own consciences, as surround us, and fill us with shame. For *we have sinned*, and shame came in with sin, and still attends upon it.

We are sinners *by descent*, guilt and corruption are entailed upon us; *we and our fathers have sinned*; we were sinners *betimes*, we began early in a course of sin, we have sinned *from our youth*; we have continued in it, have sinned *even unto this day*, though often called to repent, and forsake our sins. That which is the malignity of sin, the worst thing in it, is, the affront we have put upon God by it; *we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God*, forbidding us to sin, and commanding us, when we have sinned, to repent." Now all this seems to be the language of the penitents of the *house of Israel*, (v. 20.) of the ten tribes; either of those that were in captivity, or those of them that remained in their own land. And the prophet takes notice of their repentance, to provoke the men of

Judah to a holy emulation. David used it as an argument with the elders of Judah, that it would be a shame for them, that were *his bone and his flesh*, to be *the last in bringing the king back*, when the men of Israel appeared forward in it, 2 Sam. xix. 11, 12. So the prophet excites Judah to repent, because Israel did; and well it were if the zeal of others less likely would provoke us to strive to get before them, and go beyond them, in that which is good.

CHAP. IV.

It should seem that the two first verses of this chapter might better have been joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, for they are directed to Israel, the ten tribes, by way of reply to their compliance with God's call, directing and encouraging them to hold their resolution, v. 1, 2. The rest of the chapter concerns Judah and Jerusalem. I. They are called to repent and reform, v. 3, 4. II. They are warned of the advance of Nebuchadnezzar and his forces against them, and are told that it is for their sins, from which they are again exhorted to wash themselves, v. 5.. 18. III. To afflict them the more with the greatness of the desolation that was coming, the prophet does himself bitterly lament it, and sympathize with his people in the calamities it brought upon them, and the plunge it brought them to, representing it as a reduction of the world to its first chaos, v. 19.. 31.

1. IF thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, return unto me; and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove. 2. And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.

When God called to backsliding *Israel* to return, (ch. iii. 22.) they immediately answered, *Lord, we return*; now God here takes notice of their answer, and, by way of reply to it,

1. He directs them how to pursue their good resolutions; "Dest thou say, *I will return*?" (1.) "Then thou must *return unto me*; make a thorough work of it. Do not only return *from* thine idolatries, but return to the instituted worship of the God of Israel." Or, "Thou must return *speedily*, and not delay; (as Isa. xxi. 12. *If ye will inquire, inquire ye*; so,) if ye will return unto me, *return ye*; do not talk of it, but *do it*." (2.) "Thou must utterly *abandon* all sin, and not retain any of the relics of idolatry; *put away thine abominations out of my sight*," out of *all places*, for every place is under mine eye; especially out of the temple; the house which I have in a particular manner *mine eye upon*, to see that it is kept clean. It intimates that their idolatries were not only *obvious*, but *offensive* to the eye of God; they were *abominations* which he could not endure the sight of, therefore they were to be *put away out of his sight*; they were a provocation to the pure eyes of God's glory. Sin must be put away out of the heart, else it is not put away out of God's sight, for the heart and all that is in it lie open before his eye. (3.) They must not return to sin again; so some understand that, *Thou shalt not remove*, reading it, *Thou shalt not, or must not, wander*. "*If thou wilt put away thine abominations, and wilt not wander* after them again, as thou hast done, all shall be well." (4.) They must give unto God the glory due unto his name; (v. 2.) *Thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth*. His existence shall be with thee the most sacred fact, than which nothing can be more sure; and his judgment the supreme court to which thou shalt appeal, than which nothing can be more awful." Swearing is an act of religious worship, in which we are to give honour to

God three ways. [1.] We must swear *by the true God* only, and not by creatures, or any false gods; by the God that *liveth*, not by the gods that are deaf, and dumb, and dead; by him *only*, and not *by the Lord* and *by Malcham*, as Zeph. i. 5. [2.] We must swear that *only which is true, in truth and in righteousness*; not daring to assert that which is *false*, or which we do not know to be *true*, or to assert that as certain, which is doubtful, or to promise that which we mean not to perform, or to violate the promise we have made. To say that which is *untrue*, or to do that which is *unrighteous*, is bad, but to back either with an oath is much worse. [3.] We must do it *solemnly*, swear in *judgment*, that is, when judicially called to it, and not in common conversation. Rash swearing is as great a profanation of God's name, as solemn swearing is an honour to it. See Deut. x. 20. Matth. v. 34, 37.

2. He encourages them to keep in this good mind, and adhere to their resolutions. If the scattered Israelites will thus return to God, (1.) They shall be blessed themselves; for to that sense the first words may be read; "*If thou wilt return to me, then thou shalt return*, thou shalt be brought back out of thy captivity into thy own land again, as was of old promised," Deut. iv. 29.—xxx. 2. Or, "*Then thou shalt rest in me*, shalt return to me as thy rest, even while thou art in the land of thy captivity." (2.) They shall be *blessings* to others; for their *returning* to God again will be a means of others *turning* to him, who never knew him. If thou wilt own the *living Lord*, thou wilt thereby influence the nations among whom thou art, to *bless themselves in him*, to place their happiness in his favour, and to think themselves happy in being brought to the fear of him. See Isa. lxxv. 16. *They shall bless themselves in the God of truth*, and not in false gods; shall do themselves the honour, and give themselves the satisfaction, to join themselves to him; and then *in him shall they glory*, they shall make him their Glory, and shall *please*, nay shall *pride*, themselves in the blessed change they have made. Those that part with their sins to return to God, however they scrupled the bargain at first, *when they go away, then they boast*.

3. For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow-ground, and sow not among thorns. 4. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

The prophet here turns his speech, in God's name, to the men of the place where he lived. We have heard what words he proclaimed *toward the north*, (ch. iii. 12.) for the comfort of those that were now in captivity, and were humbled under the hand of God; let us now see what he says to the *men of Judah and Jerusalem*, who were now in prosperity, for their conviction and awakening. In these two verses, he exhorts them to repentance and reformation, as the only way left them to prevent the desolating judgments that were ready to break in upon them. Observe,

1. The duties required of them, which they are concerned to do.

(1.) They must do by their hearts as they do by their ground that they expect any good of; they must *plough it up*; (v. 3.) *Break up your fallow ground. Plough to yourselves a ploughing*, or, "*Plough up your plough-land, that you sow not among thorns*, that you may not labour in vain, for

your own safety and welfare, as those do that *sow good seed among thorns*, and as you have been doing a great while. Put yourselves into a frame fit to receive mercy from God, and put away all that which keeps it from you, and then you may expect to receive mercy, and to prosper in your endeavours to help yourselves." Note, [1.] An unconvinced, unhumiliated heart is like *fallow-ground*, ground untilled, unoccupied. It is *ground* capable of improvement; it is *our* ground, let out to us, and we must be accountable for it; but it is *fallow*; it is *unfenced*, and lies common, it is *unfruitful*, and of no advantage to the owner, and (which is principally intended) it is overgrown with *thorns* and weeds, which are the natural product of the corrupt heart, if it be not renewed with grace. Rain and sunshine are lost upon it, Heb. vi. 7, 8. [2.] We are concerned to get this fallow-ground ploughed up; we must search into our own hearts, let the word of God *divide* (as the plough does) *between the joints and the marrow*, Heb. iv. 12. We must *rend our hearts*, Joel ii. 13. We must pluck up by the roots those corruptions, which, as thorns, choke both our endeavours and our expectations, Hos. x. 12.

(2.) They must do that to their souls, which was done to their bodies when they were taken into the covenant with God; (v. 4.) "*Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskin of your heart*. Mortify the flesh and the lusts of it. Pare off that *superfluity of naughtiness*, which hinders your *receiving with meekness the engrafted word*, Jam. i. 21. Boast not of, and rest not in, the circumcision of the body, for that is but a sign, and will not serve without the *thing signified*. It is a *dedicating* sign. Do that in sincerity, which was done in profession by your circumcision; devote and consecrate yourselves unto the Lord, to be to him a peculiar people." Circumcision is an *obligation to keep the law*; lay yourselves afresh under that obligation. It is a *seal of the righteousness of faith*; lay hold then of that righteousness, and so *circumcise yourselves to the Lord*.

2. The danger they are threatened with, which they are concerned to avoid. Repent and reform, *lest my fury come forth like fire*, which it is now ready to do, as that fire which came forth from the Lord, and consumed the sacrifices, and which was always kept *burning* upon the altar, and none might *quench it*; such is God's wrath against impenitent sinners, *because of the evil of their doings*. Note, (1.) That which is to be dreaded by us more than any thing else, is, the wrath of God; for that is the spring and bitterness of all present miseries, and will be the quintessence and perfection of everlasting misery. (2.) It is the *evil of our doings*, that kindles the fire of God's wrath against us. (3.) The consideration of the imminent danger we are in, of falling and perishing under this wrath, should awaken us with all possible care to *sanctify ourselves to God's glory*, and to see that we be *sanctified by his grace*.

5. Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defenced cities. 6. Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction. 7. The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way: he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate: and thy cities shall be laid waste without an inhabitant. 8. For this

gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl; for the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us. 9. And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the LORD, *that* the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder. 10. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul. 11. At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse, 12. *Even* a full wind from those *places* shall come unto me: now also will I give sentence against them. 13. Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots *shall be* as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Wo unto us! for we are spoiled. 14. O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee! 15. For a voice declareth from Dan, and publisheth affliction from mount Ephraim. 16. Make ye mention to the nations: behold, publish against Jerusalem, *that* watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah. 17. As keepers of a field are they against her round about; because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the LORD. 18. Thy way and thy doings have procured these *things* unto thee; *this is* thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thy heart.

God's usual method is, to warn before he wounds. In these verses, accordingly, God gives notice to the Jews of the general desolation that would shortly be brought upon them by a foreign invasion. This must be *declared* and *published* in all the cities of Judah, and streets of Jerusalem, that all might hear and fear, and by this loud alarm be either brought to repentance, or left inexcusable. The prediction of this calamity is here given very largely, and in lively expressions, which one would think should have awakened and affected the most stupid. Observe,

I. The war proclaimed, and general notice given of the advance of the enemy. It is published now, some years before, by the prophet; but since this will be slighted, it shall be published after another manner, when the judgment is actually breaking in, *v. 5, 6.* The trumpet must be blown, the standard must be set up, a summons must be issued out to the people, to *gather together*, and to draw toward Zion, either to guard it, or expecting to be guarded by it. There must be a general rendezvous, the militia must be raised, and all the forces mustered. Those that are able men, and fit for service, must go into the *defenced cities*, to garrison them; those that are weak, and would lessen their provisions, but not increase their strength, must *retire*, and not *stau*.

II. An express arrived with intelligence of the

approach of the king of Babylon and his army. It is an *evil* that God will bring from the north, as he had said, *ch. i. 15.* *even a great destruction*, beyond all that had yet come upon the nation of the Jews. The enemy is here compared,

1. To a lion that comes up from his thicket, when he is hungry, to seek his prey, *v. 7.* The helpless beasts are so terrified with his roaring, (as some report,) that they cannot flee from him, and so become an easy prey to him. Nebuchadnezzar is this roaring, tearing lion, the *destroyer of the nations*, that has laid many countries waste, and now is on his way on full speed toward the land of Judah. The *destroyer of the Gentiles* shall be the *destroyer of the Jews too*, when they have by their idolatry made themselves like the Gentiles. He is *gone forth from his place*, from Babylon, or the place of the rendezvous of his army, on purpose against *this land*; that is the prey he has now his eye upon, not to plunder it only, but to make it desolate, and herein he shall succeed to that degree, that the cities shall be *laid waste, without inhabitants*, shall be *overgrown with grass* as a field; so some read it.

2. To a *drying, blasting wind*, (*v. 11.*) a parching, scorching wind, which spoils the fruits of the earth, and withers them. Not a wind which brings rain, but such as comes out of the north, which *drives away rain*, (*Prov. xxv. 23.*) but brings something worse instead of it, such shall this evil out of the north be to this people; a *black freezing wind*, which they can neither *fence against*, nor *flee from*, but, wherever they go, it shall surround and pursue them; and they cannot see it before it comes, but, when it comes, they shall feel it. It is a *wind of the high places in the wilderness, or plain*, that beats upon the tops of the hills, or that carries all before it in the plain, where there is no shelter, but the ground is all champaign. It shall come in its full force toward the *daughters of my people*, that have been brought up so tenderly and delicately, that they could not endure to have the wind blow upon them. Now this fierce wind shall come against them, not to fan, or cleanse them, not such a gentle wind as is used in winnowing corn, but a *full wind*, (*v. 12.*) a strong and violent wind, blowing full upon them; this shall come to me, or rather for me, it shall come with commission from God, and shall accomplish that for which he sends it; for this, as other *stormy winds*, fulfils his word.

3. To *clouds* and *whirlwinds* for swiftness, *v. 12.* The Chaldean army shall come up as *clouds* driven with the wind; so thick shall they stand, so fast shall they march, and it shall be to no purpose to offer to stop them, or to make head against them, any more than to arrest a *cloud*, or give check to a *whirlwind*. The horses are *swifter than eagles* when they fly upon their prey; it is in vain to think either of opposing them, or of outrunning them.

4. To *watchers*, and the *keepers of a field*, *v. 15—17.* The voice declares from Dan, a city which lay farthest north of all the cities of Canaan, and therefore received the first tidings of this evil from the north, and hastened it to mount Ephraim, that part of the land of Israel which lay next to Judea; they received the news of the affliction, and transmitted it to Jerusalem. Ill news fly apace; and an impenitent people, that hate to be reformed, expect no other than ill news. Now, what is the news? Tell the *nations*, those mixed nations that now inhabit the cities of the ten tribes, mention it to them, that they may provide for their own safety: but publish it *against Jerusalem*, that is the place aimed at, the game shot at, let them know that *watchers are come from a far country*, soldiers, that will watch all opportunities to do mischief. Private soldiers we call *private sentinels*, or *watchmen*. They are coming in full career, and give out their

voice against the cities of Judah; they design to invest them, to make themselves masters of them, and to attack them with loud shouts, as sure of victory. As *keepers of a field* surround it, to keep all out from it, so shall they surround the cities of Judah, to keep all in them, till they be constrained to surrender at discretion; they are *against her round about, compassing her on every side*. See Luke xix. 43. As formerly the good angels, *those watchers and holy ones*, were like *keepers of a field* to Jerusalem, watching about it, that nothing might go in, to its prejudice; so now their enemies were as *watchers and keepers of a field*, surrounding it, that nothing might go in, to its relief and succour.

III. The lamentable cause of this judgment: how is it that Judah and Jerusalem come to be thus abandoned to ruin? See how it came to this. 1. They sinned against God, it was all owing to themselves; *She has been rebellious against me, saith the Lord*, v. 17. Their enemies surrounded them as *keepers of a field*, because they had taken up arms against their rightful Lord and Sovereign, and were to be seized as rebels. The Chaldeans are breaking in upon them, and it was sin that opened the gap at which they entered; *Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee*, (v. 18.) thy evil way, and thy doings that have not been good. It was not a *false step* or two that did them this mischief, but their *way and course* of living were bad. Note, Sin is the *procuring* cause of all our troubles. Those that go on in sin, while they are endeavouring to ward off mischiefs with one hand, are at the same time pulling them upon their own heads with the other. 2. God was angry with them for their sin. It is the *fierce anger of the Lord* that makes the army of the Chaldeans thus fierce, thus furious; that is kindled against us, and is *not turned back from us*, v. 8. Note, In men's anger against us, and the violence of that, we must see and own God's anger, and the power of that. If that were *turned back from us*, our enemies should not come forward against us. 3. In his just and holy anger he condemned them to this dreadful punishment: *Now also will I give sentence against them*, v. 12. The execution was done, not in a heat, but in pursuance of a sentence solemnly passed, according to equity, and upon mature deliberation. Some read it, *Now will I do execution upon them*, according to the doom formerly passed; and *we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth*, and the execution of that judgment.

IV. The lamentable effects of this judgment, upon the first alarm given of it. 1. The people that should *fight* shall quite *despair*, and shall not have a heart to make the least stand against the enemy; (v. 8.) "*For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl*; you will do so, when the cry is made through the kingdom, *Arm, arm*: all will be seized with a consternation, and all put into confusion; instead of girding on the sword, they will gird on the sackcloth; instead of animating one another to a vigorous resistance, they will *lament and howl*, and so dishearten one another. While the enemy is yet at a distance, they will give up all for gone, and cry, *Wo unto us, for we are spoiled*, v. 13. We are all undone, the spoilers will certainly carry the day, and it is in vain to make head against them." Judah and Jerusalem had been famed for *valiant* men; but see what is the effect of sin, by depriving men of their confidence toward God, it deprives them of their courage toward men. 2. Their great men, who should contrive for the public safety, shall be at their wit's end; (v. 9.) *At that day, the heart of the king shall perish*, both his wisdom and his courage; despairing of success, he shall have no spirit to do any thing, and, if he had, he will not know what to do. His *princes* and privy-council-

lors, who should animate and advise him, shall be as much at a loss, and as much in despair, as he. See how *easily*, how *effectually*, God can bring ruin upon a people that are doomed to it, merely by dispiriting them, *taking away the heart of the chief of them*, (Job xii. 20, 24.) *cutting off the spirit of princes*, Ps. lxxvi. 12. The business of the *priests* was to encourage the people in the time of war; they were to say to the people, *Fear not, and let not your hearts faint*, Deut. xx. 2, 3. They were to blow the trumpets, for an assurance to them that in the day of battle they should be *remembered before the Lord their God*, Num. x. 9. But now the *priests* themselves shall be *astonished*, and shall have no heart themselves to do their office, and therefore shall not be likely to put spirit into the people. The *prophets* too, the false prophets, who had cried *peace* to them, shall be put into the greatest *amazement* imaginable, seeing their own guilty blood ready to be shed by that sword which they had often told the people there was no danger of. Note, God's judgments come with the greatest terror upon those that have been most secure. Our Saviour foretells that at the last destruction of Jerusalem *men's hearts should fail them for fear*, Luke xxi. 26. And it is common for those who have cheated and flattered people into a carnal security, not only to *fail* them, but to *discourage* them when the trouble comes.

V. The prophet's complaint of the people's being deceived, v. 10. It is expressed strangely, as we read it, *Ah, Lord God, surely thou hast greatly deceived this people, saying, Ye shall have peace*. We are sure that God deceives none; let no man say, *when he is tempted or deluded*, that God has tempted or deluded him. But, 1. The people *deceived themselves* with the promises that God had made in general of his favour to that nation, and the many peculiar privileges with which they were *dignified*; building upon them, though they took no care to perform the *conditions*, on which the accomplishment of those promises, and the continuance of those privileges, did depend; they had no regard to the *threatenings* which in the law were set over against those promises. Thus they *cheated themselves*, and then wickedly complained that God had *cheated them*. 2. The false prophets *deceived* them with promises of peace, which they made them in God's name, ch. xxviii. 17.—xxvii. 9. If God had sent them, he had indeed *greatly deceived* the people, but he did not. It was the people's fault that they gave them credit; and here also they *deceived themselves*. 3. God had permitted the false prophets to *deceive*, and the people to be *deceived* by them, giving up both to *strong delusions*, to punish them *for not receiving the truth in the love of it*. Herein the Lord was righteous; but the prophet complains of it as the sorest judgment of all, for by this means they had been hardened in their sins. 4. It may be read with an interrogation, *Hast thou indeed thus deceived this people?* It is plain that they are *greatly deceived*, for they expect *peace*, whereas the *sword reaches unto the soul*; it is a killing sword, abundance of lives are lost, and more likely to be. Now, was it God that deceived them? No, he had often given them warning of judgments in general, and of this in particular; but their own prophets *deceive* them, and cry *peace* to them, to whom the God of heaven does not speak peace. It is a pitiable thing, and that which every good man greatly laments, to see people flattered into their own ruin, and promising themselves peace, when war is at the door; and this we should complain of to God, who alone can prevent such a fatal delusion.

VI. The prophet's *endeavour to undeceive* them; when the prophets they loved and caressed dealt falsely with them, he whom they had hated and persecuted dealt faithfully.

1. He shows them *their wound*; they were loath to see it, very loath to have it searched into; but if they will allow themselves the liberty of a free thought, they might discover their punishment in their sin; (v. 18.) "*This is thy wickedness, because it is bitter.*" Now thou seest that it is a bitter thing to depart from God, and will certainly be *bitterness in the latter end*; (ch. ii. 19.) it produces bitter effects, and grief that *reaches unto the heart*, touches to the quick, and in the most tender part; the sword *reaches to the soul*," v. 10. God can make trouble reach the heart even of those that would lay nothing to heart. And by this thou mayest see *what is thy wickedness*, that it is a bitter thing, a *root of bitterness*, that bears gall and wormwood, and that it has *reached to the heart*; it is the corruption of the soul, of the *imagination of the thought of the heart*. If the heart were not polluted with sin, it would not be disturbed and disquieted as it is with trouble.

2. He shows them *the cure*, v. 14. Since *thy wickedness reaches to the heart*, there the application must be made; *O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved.* By Jerusalem he means *each one* of the inhabitants of Jerusalem; for every man has a *heart of his own* to take care of, and it is *personal* reformation that must help the *public*. Every one must return from *his own evil way*, and in order to that, cleanse *his own evil heart*. And let *the heart of the city* too be purified, not the suburbs only, the out-skirts of it; the vitals of a state must be amended by the reformation of those that have the commanding influence upon it. Note, (1.) Reformation is absolutely necessary to salvation; there is no other way of preventing judgments, or turning them away, when we are threatened with them, but taking away the sin by which we have procured them to ourselves. (2.) No reformation is *saving*, but that which *reaches the heart*. There is *heart-wickedness* that is defiling to the soul, from which we must wash ourselves. By repentance and faith we must wash our hearts from the guilt we have contracted by spiritual wickedness, by those sins which begin and end in the heart, and go no further: and by mortification and watchfulness we must suppress and prevent this heart-wickedness for the future. The tree must be made good, else the fruit will not. Jerusalem was all overspread with the leprosy of sin; now as the physicians agree with respect to the body when afflicted with leprosy, that external applications will do no good, unless physic be taken inwardly to carry off the humours that lurk there, and to change the mass of the blood, so it is with the soul, so it is with the state, there will be no effectual reformation of *manners*, without a reformation of the *mind*, the mistakes there must be rectified, the corruptions there must be mortified, and the evil dispositions there changed. "Though thou art Jerusalem, called a *holy city*, that will not save thee, unless thou *wash thine heart from wickedness.*" In the latter part of the verse he reasons with them, *How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?* He complains here, [1.] Of the delays of their reformation; "*How long shall that filthy heart of thine continue unwashed? When shall it once be?*" Note, The God of heaven thinks the time long that his room is usurped, and his interest opposed, in our souls, ch. xiii. 27. [2.] Of the root of their corruption; *the vain thoughts that lodged within them*, and defiled their hearts, from which they must wash their hearts. *Thoughts of iniquity or mischief*, these are the *evil thoughts* that are the *spawn of the evil heart*, from which all other wickedness is produced, Matt. xv. 19. These are *our own*, the conceptions of *our own* lusts, (Jam. i. 15.) and they are most dangerous when they *lodge within us*, when they are admitted and entertained as guests, and

are suffered to *continue*. Some read it *thoughts of affliction*, such thoughts as will bring nothing but affliction and misery. Some by the vain thoughts here understand all those frivolous pleas and excuses with which they turned off the reproofs and calls of the word, and rendered them ineffectual, and bolstered themselves up in their wickedness. *Wash thy heart from wickedness*, and think not to say, *We are not polluted*, (ch. ii. 23.) or, "*We are Jerusalem*, we have Abraham *to our father*," Matth. iii. 8, 9.

19. My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me: I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. 20. Destruction upon destruction is cried: for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. 21. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet? 22. For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. 23. I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. 24. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. 25. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. 26. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger. 27. For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end. 28. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it. 29. The whole city shall flee for the noise of the horsemen and bowmen; they shall go into thickets, and climb up upon the rocks: every city shall be forsaken, and not a man dwell therein. 30. And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; thy lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life. 31. For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, and the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child; the voice of the daughter of Zion, that bewaileth herself, that spreadeth her hands, saying, Wo is me now: for my soul is wearied because of murderers.

The prophet is here in agony, and cries out like one upon the rack of pain with some acute distem

per, or as a woman in travail. The expressions are very pathetic and moving, enough to melt a heart of stone into compassion, *My bowels, my bowels, I am pained at my very heart;* and yet well, and in health himself, and nothing ails him. Note, A good man in such a bad world as this is, cannot but be a man of sorrows. *My heart makes a noise in me,* through the tumult of my spirits, and *I cannot hold my peace.* Note, The grievance and the grief sometimes may be such, that the most prudent, patient man cannot forbear complaining.

Now, what is the matter? What is it that puts this good man into such agitation? It is not for himself, or any affliction in his family, that he grieves thus; but it is purely upon the public account, it is his people's case that he lays to heart thus.

I. They are very *sinful*, and will not be reformed, v. 22. These are the words of God himself, for so the prophet chose to give this character of the people, rather than in his own words, or as from himself; *My people are foolish.* God calls them *his people*, though they are *foolish*. They have cast him off, but he has not cast them off, Rom. xi. 1. "They are *my people*, whom I have been in covenant with, and still have mercy in store for. They are *foolish*, for they have not known me." Note, Those are *foolish* indeed, that have not known God; especially that call themselves *his people*, and have the advantages of coming into acquaintance with him, and yet have not known him. They are *sottish children*, stupid and senseless, and have no understanding. They cannot distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil; they cannot discern the mind of God, either in his word or in his providence; they do not understand what their true interest is, nor on which side it lies. They are *wise to do evil*, to plot mischief against the quiet in the land, wise to contrive the gratification of their lusts, and then to conceal and palliate them. But *to do good they have no knowledge*, no contrivance, no application of mind; they know not how to make a good use either of the ordinances or of the providences of God, nor how to bring about any design for the good of their country. Contrary to this, should be our character; (Rom. xvi. 19.) *I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.*

II. They are very *miserable*, and cannot be relieved. He cries out, *Because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, and seen the standard*, both giving the alarm of war, v. 19, 21. He does not say, *Thou hast heard, O my ear*, but, *O my soul*, because the event was yet future, and it is by the spirit of prophecy that he sees it, and receives the impression of it. His *soul* heard it from the words of God, and therefore he was well assured of it, and as much affected with it, as if he had heard it with his bodily ears. He expresses this deep concern, 1. To show that though he foretold this calamity, yet he was far from desiring the *woful day*; for a *woful day* it would be to him. It becomes us to tremble at the thoughts of the misery that sinners are running themselves into, though we have good hopes, through grace, that we ourselves are *delivered from the wrath to come*. 2. To awaken them to a holy fear, and so to a care to prevent so great a judgment by a true and timely repentance. Note, Those that would affect others with the word of God, should evidence that they are themselves affected with it.

Now let us see what there is in the destruction here foreseen and foretold, that is so very affecting.

(1.) It is a *swift and sudden* destruction; it comes upon Judah and Jerusalem, ere they are aware, and pours in so fast upon them, that they have not the least breathing-time. They have no time to reflect their thoughts, much less to recruit or recover

their strength; *Destruction upon destruction is cried*, (v. 20.) *breach upon breach*, one sad calamity, like Job's messengers, treading upon the heels of another. The death of Josiah breaks the ice, and plucks up the flood-gates; within three months after that, his son and successor Jehoahaz is deposed by the king of Egypt; within two or three years after, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, and took it, and thenceforward he was continually making descents upon the land of Judah with his armies during the reigns of Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah, till about nineteen years after he completed their ruin in the destruction of Jerusalem: but *suddenly were their tents spoiled, and their curtains in a moment*. Though the cities held out for some time, the country was laid waste at the very first; the *shepherds*, and all that lived in *tents*, were plundered immediately, they and their effects fell into the enemies' hands: therefore we find the Rechabites, who dwelt in *tents*, upon the first coming of the army of the Chaldees into the land, retiring to Jerusalem, Jer. xxxv. 11. The inhabitants of the villages soon ceased; *Suddenly were the tents spoiled*. The *plain men that dwell in tents* were first made a prey of.

(2.) This dreadful war continued a great while, not in the borders, but in the bowels of the country; for the people were very obstinate, and would not submit to, but took all opportunities to rebel against, the king of Babylon, which did but lengthen out the calamity; they might as well have yielded at first as at last. This is complained of, v. 21. *How long shall I see the standard?* Shall the sword devour for ever? Good men are none of those that *delight in war*, for they know not how to fish in troubled waters; they are *for peace*, (Ps. cxx. 7.) and will heartily say *Amen* to that prayer, "Give peace in our time, O Lord." *O thou sword of the Lord, when wilt thou be quiet?*

(3.) The desolations made by it in the land were general and universal; *The whole land is spoiled*, or plundered; (v. 20.) so it was at first, and at length it became a perfect chaos. It was such a *desolation* as amounted in a manner to a *dissolution*; not only the superstructure, but even the foundations, were all out of course. The prophet in vision saw the extent and extremity of this destruction, and he here gives a most lively description of it, which one would think might have made those uneasy in their sins, who dwelt in a land doomed to such a ruin, which might yet have been prevented by their repentance. [1.] The earth is *without form, and void*, as it was Gen. i. 2. It is *Tohu and Bohu*, the words there used, as far as the land of Judea goes. It is *confusion and emptiness*, stripped of all its beauty, void of all its wealth, and compared with what it was, every thing out of place and out of shape. To a worse *chaos* than this will the earth be reduced at the end of time, when it, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. [2.] The heavens too are *without light*, as the earth without fruits. This alludes to the darkness that was upon the face of the deep, (Gen. i. 2.) and represents God's displeasure against them, as the eclipse of the sun did at our Saviour's death. It was not only the earth that failed them, but heaven also frowned upon them; and with their trouble they had darkness, for they could not see through their troubles. The smoke of their houses and cities which the enemy burned, and the dust which their army raised in its march, even darkened the sun, so that the heavens had no light. Or, it may be taken figuratively; *The earth* (that is, the common people) was impoverished, and in confusion; and the *heavens* (that is, the princes and rulers) had no light, no wisdom in themselves, nor were any comfort to the people, nor a guide to them. Compare Matth. xxiv. 29. [3.] The *mountains trembled*, and the hills moved

ightly; (v. 24) so formidable were the appearances of God against his people, as in the days of old they had been for them, that *the mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs*, Ps. cxiv. 4. The everlasting mountains seemed to be scattered, Hab. iii. 6. The mountains on which they had worshipped their idols, the mountains over which they had looked for succours, all trembled, as if they had been conscious of the people's guilt. The mountains, those among them that seemed to be highest and strongest, and of the firmest resolution, trembled at the approach of the Chaldean army. The hills moved lightly, as being eased of the burthen of a sinful nation, Isa. i. 24. [4.] Not the earth only, but the air, was dispeopled, and left uninhabited; (v. 25.) *I beheld the cities, the countries that used to be populous, and lo, there was no man to be seen; all the inhabitants were either killed, or fled, or taken captives, such a ruining, depopulating thing is sin: nay, even the birds of the heavens, that used to fly about, and sing among the branches, were now fled away, and no more to be seen or heard. The land of Judah is now become like the lake of Sodom, over which (they say) no bird flies; see Deut. xxix. 23. The enemies shall make such havock of the country, that they shall not so much as leave a bird alive in it.* [5.] Both the ground and the houses shall be laid waste; (v. 26.) *Lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, being deserted by the inhabitants that should cultivate it, and then soon overgrown with thorns and briars; or, being trodden down by the destroying army of the enemy. The cities also and their gates and walls are broken down, and levelled with the ground. Those that look no further than second causes, impute it to the policy and fury of the invaders: but the prophet, who looked to the first Cause, says that it is at the presence of the Lord, at his face, the anger of his countenance, even by his fierce anger, that this was done. Even angry men cannot do us any real hurt, unless God be angry with us. If our ways please him, all is well.* [6.] The meaning of all this is, that the nation shall be entirely ruined, and every part of it shall share in the destruction; neither town nor country shall escape. First, Not the country, for the whole land shall be desolate, corn-land and pasture-land, both common and enclosed, it shall all be laid waste, (v. 27.) the conquerors will have occasion for it all. Secondly, Not the men, for (v. 29.) *the whole city shall flee, all the inhabitants of the town shall quit their habitations by consent, for fear of the horsemen and bowmen; rather than lie exposed to their fury, they shall go into the thickets, where they are in danger of being torn by briars, nay, to be torn in pieces by wild beasts; and they shall climb up upon the rocks, where their lodging will be hard and cold, and the precipice dangerous. Let us not be overfond of our houses and cities; for the time may come, when rocks and thickets may be preferable, and chosen rather. This shall be the common case, for every city shall be forsaken, and not a man shall be left, that dares dwell therein. Both government and trade shall be at an end, and all civil societies and incorporations dissolved. It is a very dismal idea which this gives of the approaching desolation; but in the midst of all these threatenings comes in one comfortable word; (v. 27.) *Yet will not I make a full end; not a total consumption, for God will reserve a remnant to himself, that shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, not a final consumption, for Jerusalem shall again be built, and the land inhabited. This comes in here, in the midst of the threatenings, for the comfort of those that trembled at God's word; and it speaks to us the changeableness of God's providence; as it breaks down, so it raises up again; every end of our comforts is not a full end, however we may be ready to think it so;**

and it speaks the *unchangeableness of God's covenant*, which stands so firm, that though he may correct his people very severely, yet he will not cast them off, ch. xxx. 11.

(4.) Their case was helpless, and without remedy. [1.] God would not help them; so he tells them plainly, v. 28. And if the Lord do not help them, who can? This is that which makes their case deplorable; for this *the earth mourns, and the heavens above are black*; there are no prospects but what are very dismal; "*Because I have spoken it, I have given the word which shall not be called back, I have purposed it, it is a consumption decreed, determined, and I will not repent, not change this way, but proceed in it, and will not turn back from it.*" They would not repent, and turn back from the way of their sins, (ch. ii. 25.) and therefore God will not repent, and turn back from the way of his judgments. [2.] They could not help themselves, v. 30, 31. When the thing appeared at a distance, they flattered themselves with hopes that though God should not appear for them as he had done for Hezekiah against the Assyrian army, yet they should find some means or other to secure themselves, and give check to the forces of the enemy. But the prophet tells them, that when it comes to the setting to, they will be quite at a loss: "*When thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? What course wilt thou take? Sit down now, and consider this in time.*" He assures them that, whatever were now their contrivances and confidences,

First, They will then be *despised by their allies* whom they depended upon for assistance. He had often compared the sin of Jerusalem to *whoredom*, not only her idolatry, but her trust in creatures, in the neighbouring powers. Now here he compares her to a harlot abandoned by all the lewd ones that used to make court to her. She is supposed to do all she can to keep up her interest in their affections; she does what she can to make herself appear considerable among the nations, and a valuable ally; she compliments them by her ambassadors to the highest degree, to engage them to stand by her now in her distress; she *clothes herself with crimson*, as if she were rich, and *decks herself with ornaments of gold*, as if her treasures were still as full as ever they had been; she *rents her face with painting*, puts the best colours she can upon her present distresses, and does her utmost to palliate and extenuate her losses, sets a good face upon them. But this *painting*, though it beautifies the face for the present, really *rents* it; the frequent use of paint spoils the skin, cracks it, and makes it rough; so the case which by false colours has been made to appear better than really it was, when truth comes to light, will look so much the worse; "*And after all, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; all thy neighbours are sensible how low thou art brought; the Chaldeans will strip thee of thy crimson and ornaments, and then thy confederates will not only slight thee, and refuse to give thee any succour, but they will join with those that seek thy life, that they may come in for a share in the prey of so rich a country.*" Here seems to be an allusion to the story of Jezebel, who thought, by making herself look fair and fine, to have outlived her doom, but in vain, 2 Kings ix. 30, 33. See what creatures prove when we confide in them, how treacherous they are; instead of *saving* the life, they *seek the life*; they often change, so that they will sooner do us an ill turn, than any service. And see to how little purpose it is for those that have by sin deformed themselves in God's eyes, to think by any arts they can use to beautify themselves in the eye of the world.

Secondly, They will then be themselves in *despair*; they will find their troubles to be like the pains of a woman in travail, which she cannot es-

cape; *I have heard the voice of the daughter of Zion*, her groans echoing to the triumphant shouts of the Chaldean army, which he heard, v. 15. It is like the *voice of a woman in travail*, whose pain is exquisite, and the fruit of sin and the curse too, (Gen. iii. 16.) and extorts lamentable outcries, especially of a *woman in travail of her first child*, who, having never known before what that pain is, is the more terrified by it. Troubles are most grievous to those that have not been used to them. Zion, in this distress, since her neighbours refuse to pity her, *bewails herself*, *fetching deep sighs*; (so the word signifies;) and she *stretches her hands*, either wringing them for grief, or reaching them forth for succour. All the cry is, *Woe is me now*, (now that the decree is gone forth against her, and is past recall,) *for my soul is wearied because of murders*; the Chaldean soldiers put all to the sword that gave them any opposition, so that the land was full of murders. Zion was *wearied* of hearing tragical stories from all parts of the country, and cried out, *Woe is me!* It was well if their sufferings put them in mind of their sins, the murders committed upon them, of the murders committed by them; for God was now making inquisition for the *innocent blood* shed in Jerusalem, *which the Lord would not pardon*, 2 Kings xxiv. 4. Note, As sin will find out the sinner, so sorrow will sooner or later, find out the secure.

CHAP. V.

Reproofs for sin and threatenings of judgment are intermixed in this chapter, and are set the one over against the other: judgments are threatened, that the reproofs of sin might be the more effectual to bring them to repentance; sin is discovered, that God might be justified in the judgments threatened. I. The sins they are charged with, are, injustice, (v. 1.) Hypocrisy in religion, (v. 2.) Incurribleness, (v. 3.) The corruption and debauchery of both poor and rich, (v. 4, 5.) Idolatry and adultery, (v. 7, 8.) Treacherous departures from God, (v. 11.) An impudent defiance of him, (v. 12, 13.) And that which is at the bottom of all this, Want of the fear of God, notwithstanding the frequent calls given them to fear him, v. 20 . . 24. In the close of the chapter, they are charged with violence and oppression, (v. 26 . . 28.) and a combination of those to debauch the nation, who should have been active to reform it, v. 30, 31. II. The judgments they are threatened with are very terrible. In general, they shall be reckoned with, v. 9, 29. A foreign enemy shall be brought in upon them; (v. 15 . . 17.) shall set guards upon them; (v. 6.) shall destroy their fortifications; (v. 10.) shall carry them away into captivity; (v. 19.) and keep all good things from them, v. 25. Here in the words of God's prophets shall be fulfilled, v. 14. But, III. Here is an intimation twice given that God would in the midst of wrath remember mercy, and not utterly destroy them, v. 10, 18. This was the scope and purport of Jeremiah's preaching in the latter end of Josiah's reign, and the beginning of Jehoiakim's: but the success of it did not answer expectation.

1. **R**UN ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be *any* that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it. 2. And though they say, The Lord liveth, surely they swear falsely. 3. O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return. 4. Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know

not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God. 5. I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them: for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds. 6. Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces; because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased. 7. How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. 8. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife. 9. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

Here is,

1. A challenge to produce any one right honest man, or at least any considerable number of such, in Jerusalem, v. 1. Jerusalem was become like the old world, in which *all flesh had corrupted their way*. There were some perhaps who flattered themselves with hopes that there were yet many good men in Jerusalem, who would stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God; and there might be others who boasted of its being the Holy city, and thought that this would save it; but God bids them search the town, and intimates that they should scarcely find a man in it who *executed judgment*, and made conscience of what he said and did; "Look in the streets where they make their appearance, and converse together, and in the broad places where they keep their markets; see if you can find a man, a magistrate," (so some,) "that *executes judgment*, and administers justice impartially, that will put the laws in *execution* against vice and profaneness." When the *faithful thus cease and fail*, it is time to cry, *Woe is me!* (Mic. vii. 1, 2.) high time to cry, *Help, Lord*, Ps. xii. 1. "If there be here and there a man that is truly conscientious, and does at least *seek the truth*, yet you shall not find him in the streets and broad places, he dares not appear publicly, for he shall be abused and run down; *truth is fallen in the street*, (Isa. lix. 14.) and is forced to *seek for corners*." So pleasing would it be to God to find any such, that for their sake he would *pardon* the city; if there were but ten righteous men in Sodom, if but one of a thousand, of ten thousand, in Jerusalem, it should be spared. See how ready God is to forgive, how swift to show mercy.

But it might be said, "What do you make of those in Jerusalem that continue to make profession of religion and relation to God? Are not they men for whose sakes Jerusalem may be spared?" No, for they are not sincere in their profession; (v. 2.) *They say, The Lord liveth*, and will swear by his name only, but they *swear falsely*. 1. They are not sincere in the profession they make of respect to God, but are false to him; they honour him *with their lips*, but *their hearts are far from him*. 2. Though they appeal to God only, they make no conscience of calling him to witness to a lie. Though

they do not swear by idols, they *forswear* themselves, which is no less an affront to God, as the *God of truth*, than the other is as the *only true God*.

II. A complaint which the prophet makes to God of the obstinacy and wilfulness of these people. God had appealed to *their eyes*; (v. 1.) but here the prophet appeals to *his eyes*; (v. 3.) "*Are not thine eyes upon the truth?*" Dost thou not see every man's true character? And is not this the truth of their character, that they have *made their faces harder than a rock*?" Or, "*Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward part*; but where is it to be found among the men of this generation? For though they say, *The Lord liveth*, yet they never regard him; thou *hast stricken them* with one affliction after another, but they have *not grieved* for the affliction, they have been as stocks and stones under it, much less have they *grieved* for the sin by which they have brought it upon themselves. Thou hast gone further yet, *hast consumed them*, hast corrected them yet more severely; but they have *refused to receive correction*, to accommodate themselves to thy design in correcting them, and to answer to it. They would *not receive instruction* by the correction. They have set themselves to *outface* the divine sentence, and to *outrave* the execution of it, for they have *made their faces harder than a rock*; they cannot change countenance, neither blush for shame, nor look pale for fear, cannot be beaten back from the pursuit of their lusts, whatever check is given them; for though often called to it, they have *refused to return*, and would go forward, right or wrong, as the horse into the battle."

III. The trial made both of rich and poor, and the bad character given of both.

1. The poor were *ignorant*, and therefore they were wicked. He found many that *refused to return*, for whom he was willing to make the best excuse their case would bear, and it was this, (v. 4.) "*Surely, these are poor, they are foolish*; they never had the advantage of a good education, nor have they wherewithal to help themselves now with the means of instruction; they are forced to work hard for their living, and have no time or capacity for reading or hearing, so that they *know not the way of the Lord, or the judgments of their God*; they understand neither the way in which God by his precepts will have them to walk toward him, nor the way in which he by his providence is walking toward them." Note, (1.) Prevailing ignorance is the lamentable cause of abounding impiety and iniquity. What can one expect but works of darkness from brutish, sottish people that know nothing of God and religion, but choose to *sit in darkness*? (2.) This is commonly a reigning sin among poor people. There are *the devil's poor*, as well as God's; who, notwithstanding their poverty, might *know the way of the Lord*, so as to walk in it, and do their duty, without being book-learned; but they are *willingly ignorant*, and therefore their ignorance will not be their excuse.

2. The rich were *insolent* and haughty, and therefore they were wicked; (v. 5.) "*I will get me to the great men*, and see if I can find them more pliable to the word and providence of God; I will *speak to them*, preach at court, in hopes to make some impression upon men of polite literature; but all in vain, for though they *know the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God*, yet they are too stiff to stoop to his government: *These have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds*. They know their Master's will, but are resolved to have their own will, to *walk in the way of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes*. They think themselves too goodly to be controlled, too big to be corrected, even by the sovereign Lord of all himself.

They are for *breaking even his bands in sunder*, Ps. ii. 3. The poor are *weak*, the rich are *wilful*, and so neither do their duty."

IV. Some particular sins specified, which they were most notoriously guilty of, and which cried most loudly to Heaven for vengeance. *Their transgressions* indeed were many, of many kinds, and often repeated, and *their backslidings were increased*; they added to the number of them, and grew more and more impudent in them, v. 6. But two sins especially were justly to be looked upon as unpardonable crimes.

1. Their *spiritual whoredom*; giving that honour to idols, which is due to God only; "*Thy children, have forsaken me*, to whom they were born and dedicated, and under whom they have been brought up, and they have *sworn by them* that are no gods, have made their appeals to them as if they had been omniscient, and their proper judges." This is here put for all acts of religious worship due to God only, but with which they had honoured their idols. They have *sworn* to them, (so it may be read,) have joined themselves to them, and covenanted with them. They that *forsake God* make a bad change for those that are no gods.

2. Their *corporal whoredom*. Because they had forsaken God, and served idols, he gave them up to vile affections; and they that *dishonoured* him were left to *dishonour* themselves and their own families. They *committed adultery* most scandalously, without sense of shame, or fear of punishment, for they *assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses*, and did not blush to be seen by one another in the most scandalous places. So impudent and violent was their lust, so impatient of check, and so eager to be gratified, that they became perfect beasts; (v. 8.) like horses high-fed, they *neighed every one after his neighbour's wife*, v. 8. Unbridled lusts make men *like natural brute beasts*, such monstrous, odious things are they. And that which aggravated their sin was, that it was the abuse of God's favours to them; when they were *fed to the full*, then their lusts grew thus furious. *Fulness of bread* was fuel to the fire of Sodom's lusts. *Sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus*—luxurious living feeds the flame of lust. Fasting would help to tame the unruly evil that is so full of deadly poison, and bring the body into subjection.

V. A threatening of God's wrath against them for their wickedness, and the universal debauchery of their land.

1. The particular judgment that is threatened, v. 6. A foreign enemy shall break in upon them, get dominion over them, and shall lay all waste: their country shall be as if it were overrun and perfectly mastered by wild beasts. This enemy shall be, (1.) Like a lion of the forest, so strong, so furious, so irresistible; and he shall *slay them*. (2.) Like a wolf of the evening, which comes out at night, when he is hungry, to seek his prey, and is very fierce and ravenous; and the noise both of the lions roaring and of the wolves howling, is very hideous. (3.) Like a leopard, which is very swift and very cruel, and withal careful not to miss his prey. The army of the enemy shall *watch over their cities* so strictly as to put the inhabitants to this sad dilemma—if they stay in, they are *starved*; if they stir out, they are *stabbed*; every one that goeth out thence shall be *torn in pieces*; which intimates that in many places the enemy gave no quarter; and all this bloody work is owing to the multitude of their transgressions. It is sin that makes the great slaughter.

2. An appeal to themselves concerning the equity of it; (v. 9.) "*Shall I not visit for these things?*" Can you yourselves think that the God whose name is *Jealous*, will let such idolatries go unpunished,

or that a God of infinite purity will connive at such abominable uncleanness." These are *things* that must be reckoned for, else the honour of God's government cannot be maintained, nor his laws saved from contempt; but sinners will be tempted to think him *altogether such a one as themselves*, contrary to that conviction of their own consciences concerning the judgment of God, which is necessary to be supported, That they which do *such things are worthy of death*, Rom. i. 32. Observe, When God punishes sin, he is said to *visit* for it, or inquire into it; for he *weighs* the cause before he *passes sentence*. Sinners have reason to expect punishment, upon the account of God's holiness; to which sin is highly offensive, as well as upon the account of his justice, to which it renders us obnoxious; this is intimated in that, *Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?* It is not only the word of God, but his soul, that takes vengeance. And he has national judgments wherewith to take vengeance for national sins. *Such nations as this* was cannot long go unpunished. *How shall I pardon thee for this?* v. 7. Not but that those who have been guilty of these sins, have found mercy with God, as to their eternal estate; (Manasseh himself did, though so much accessory to the iniquity of those things;) but nations, *as such*, being rewardable and punishable only in this life, it would not be for the glory of God to let a nation so very wicked as this pass without some manifest tokens of his displeasure.

10. Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they *are* not the LORD's.

11. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD. 12. They have belied the LORD, and said, *It is not he*, neither shall evil come upon us, neither shall we see sword nor famine; 13. And the prophets shall become wind, and the word *is* not in them: thus shall it be done unto them.

14. Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them. 15. Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say. 16. Their quiver is as an open sepulchre, they *are* all mighty men. 17. And they shall eat up thy harvest, and thy bread,

which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thy herds; they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig-trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword. 18. Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you. 19. And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doth the LORD our God all these *things* unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods

in your land; so shall ye serve strangers in a land *that is* not yours.

We may observe in these verses, as before,

1. The sin of this people, upon which the commission signed against them is grounded. God disowns them, and dooms them to destruction, v. 10. But *is there not a cause?* Yes; for, 1. They have *deserted the law of God*, v. 11. *The house of Israel and the house of Judah*, though at variance with one another, yet both agreed to *deal very treacherously against God*. They forsook the worship of him, and therein violated their covenants with him; they revolted from him, and played the hypocrite with him. 2. They have *defied* the judgments of God, and given the lie to his threatenings in the mouth of his prophets, v. 12, 13. They were often told that evil would certainly *come upon them*; they must expect some desolating judgments, *sword and famine*; but they were secure, and said, *We shall have peace, though we go on*. For, (1.) They did not fear *what God is*; they *belied him*, and confronted the dictates even of natural light concerning him, for they said, *"It is not he*, he is not such a one as we have been made to believe he is; he does not see, or not regard, or will not require it; and therefore *no evil shall come upon us*." Multitudes are ruined by being made to believe that God will not be so strict with them as his word says he will; nay, by this artifice Satan undid us all; *Ye shall not surely die*. So here, *Neither shall we see sword nor famine*. Vain hopes of impunity are the deceitful support of all impiety. (2.) They did not fear *what God said*. The prophets gave them fair warning, but they turned it off with a jest; "They do but talk so, because it is their trade; they are words of *course*, and words are but wind. It is not the word of the Lord that is *in them*; it is only the language of their melancholy fancy, or their ill will to their country, because they are not preferred." Note, Impenitent sinners are not willing to own any thing to be the word of God, that makes against them; that tends either to part them *from*, or disquiet them *in*, their sins. They threaten the prophets; *"They shall become wind*, shall pass away unregarded, and *thus shall it be done unto them*, what they threaten against us we will inflict upon them. Do they frighten us with *famine?* Let them be *fed with the bread of affliction*." (So Micaiah was, 1 Kings xxii. 27.) "Do they tell us of the sword? Let them perish by the sword," ch. ii. 30. Thus their mocking and misusing of God's messengers, filled the measure of their iniquity.

II. The punishment of this people for their sin.

1. The threatenings they laughed at shall be executed; (v. 14.) *Because ye speak this word* of contempt concerning the prophets, and the word in their mouths, therefore God will put honour upon them and their words, for not one iota or tittle of them shall *fall to the ground*, 1 Sam. iii. 19. Here God turns to the prophet Jeremiah, who had been thus bantered, and perhaps had been a little uneasy at it; *Behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire*. God owns them for *his words*, though men denied them, and will as surely make them to take effect as the fire consumes combustible matter that is in its way. *The word shall be fire, and the people wood*. Sinners by sin make themselves fuel to that wrath of God, which is *revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men* in the scripture. The word of God will certainly be too hard for those that contend with it. They shall break, who will not bow before it.

2. The enemy they thought themselves in no danger of, shall be brought upon them. God gives them their commission; (v. 10.) *"Go ye up upon her walls, mount them, trample upon them, tread*

them down; walls of stone, before the divine commission, shall be but mud walls. Having made yourselves masters of the walls, you may *destroy* at pleasure, you may *take away her battlements*, and leave the fenced, fortified cities to lie open; for her *battlements* are not the Lord's, he does not own them, and therefore will not protect and fortify them." They were not erected in his fear, nor with a dependence upon him: the people have trusted to them more than to God, and therefore they are *not his*. When the city is filled with sin, God will not patronise the fortifications of it, and then they are paper walls. What can defend us, when he who is our Defence, and the Defender of all our defences, is *departed from us*? Numb. xiv. 9. What is not of God, cannot stand, not stand long, nor stand us in any stead.

What dreadful work these invaders should make, is here described; (v. 15.) *Lo, I will bring a nation upon you, O house of Israel.* Note, God has all nations at his command, does what he pleases with them, and makes what use he pleases of them. And sometimes he is pleased to make the nations of the earth, the heathen nations, a scourge to the house of Israel, when that is become an *hypocritical nation*. This nation of the Chaldeans is here said to be a remote nation; it is *brought upon them from afar*, and therefore will make the *greater spoil*, and the *longer stay*, that they may pay themselves well for so long a march. "It is a nation that thou hast had no commerce with, by reason of their distance, and therefore canst not expect to find favour with." God can bring trouble upon us from places and causes very remote. It is a *mighty nation*, that there is no making head against; *an ancient nation*, that value themselves upon their antiquity, and will therefore be the more haughty and imperious. It is a *nation whose language thou knowest not*; they spake the Syriac tongue, which the Jews at that time were not acquainted with, as appears, 2 Kings xviii. 26. The difference of language would make it the more difficult to treat with them of peace; compare this with the threatening, (Deut. xxviii. 49.) which it seems to have a reference to, for the law and the prophets exactly agree. They are well armed; *Their quiver is an open sepulchre*; their arrows shall fly so thick, hit so sure, and wound so deep, that they shall be reckoned to breathe nothing but death and slaughter; they are able-bodied, all effective, *mighty men*, v. 16. And when they have made themselves masters of the country, they shall devour all before them, and reckon all their own, that they can lay their hands on, v. 17. (1.) They shall *strip* the country, shall not only *sustain*, but *surfeit*, their soldiers with the rich products of this fruitful land. They shall not *store up*, (then it might possibly have been retrieved,) but *eat up, thine harvest* in the field, and *thy bread* in the house, *which thy sons and thy daughters shall eat*. Note, What we have, we have for our families, and it is a comfort to see our sons and daughters eating that which we have taken care and pains for. But it is a grievous vexation to see it devoured by strangers and enemies; to see their camps victualled with our stores, while those that are dear to us are perishing for want of it; this also is according to the curse of the law; (Deut. xxviii. 33.) "They shall *eat up thy flocks and herds*, out of which thou hast taken sacrifices for thine idols; they shall not leave thee the fruit of *thy vines and fig-trees*." (2.) They shall *starve* the towns; "They shall *impovertish thy fenced cities*," (and what fence is there against poverty, when it comes like an armed man?) "those cities *wherein thou trustedst* to be a protection to the country." Note, It is just with God to *impovertish* that which we make our *confidence*. They shall impoverish them

with the sword, cutting off all provisions from coming to them, and intercepting trade and commerce, which will impoverish even *fenced cities*.

III. An intimation of the tender compassion God has yet for them: the enemy is commissioned to *destroy* and lay waste, but must not *make a full end*, v. 10. Though they make a great *slaughter*, yet some must be left to *live*; though they make a great *spoil*, yet something must be left to *live upon*, for God has said it, (v. 18.) with a *non obstante*—*a nevertheless*, to the present desolation; Even in *those days*, dismal as they are, *I will make a full end with you*; and if *God will not*, the enemy shall not. God has mercy in store for this people, and therefore will set bounds to this desolating judgment; *hitherto it shall come, and no further*.

IV. The justification of God in these proceedings against them: as he will appear to be *gracious* in not *making a full end* with them, so he will appear to be *righteous* in coming so near it, and will have it acknowledged that he has done them no wrong, v. 19. Observe, 1. A reason *demanded*, insolently demanded, by the people for these judgments. They will say, "Wherefore doth the Lord our God do all this unto us? What provocation have we given him, or what quarrel has he with us?" As if against such a sinful nation there did not appear cause enough of action. Note, Unhumbled hearts are ready to charge God with injustice in their afflictions, and pretend they are to seek for the cause of them, when it is written in the forehead of them. But, 2. Here is a reason immediately assigned: the prophet is instructed what answer to give them, for God *will be justified when he speaks*, though he speaks with ever so much terror. He must tell them that God does this against them for what they have done against him, and that they may, if they please, read their sin in their punishment. Do not they know very well that *they have forsaken God*; and therefore can they think it strange if he has *forsaken them*? Have they forgotten how often they *served strange gods in their own land*, that good land, in the abundance of the fruits of which they ought to have *served God with gladness of heart*; and therefore is it not just with God to make them *serve strangers* in a strange land, where they can call nothing *their own*, as he had threatened to do? Deut. xxviii. 47, 48. They that are fond of strangers, to strangers let them go.

20. Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying, 21. Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not: 22. Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? 23. But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. 24. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

The prophet, having reproved them for sin, and threatened the judgments of God against them, is here sent to them again upon another errand, which

he must *publish in Judah*: the purport of it is to persuade them to *fear God*, which would be an effectual principle of their reformation, as the want of that fear had been at the bottom of their apostacy.

1. He complains of the shameful stupidity of this people, and their bent to backslide from God; speaking as if he knew not what course to take with them. For,

1. Their *understandings were darkened*, and *unapt to admit the rays of the divine light*. They are a *foolish people and without understanding*, they apprehend not the mind of God, though ever so plainly discovered to them, by the written word, by his prophets, and by his providence; (v. 21.) *They have eyes, but they see not, ears, but they hear not*, like the idols which they made and worshipped, Ps. cxv. 5, 6, 8. One would have thought that they took notice of things, but really they did not; they had intellectual faculties and capacities, but they did not employ and improve them as they ought. Herein they disappointed the expectations of all their neighbours, who, observing what excellent means of knowledge they had, concluded, *Surely they are a wise and an understanding people*; (Deut. iv. 6.) and yet really they are a *foolish people*, and *without understanding*. Note, We cannot judge of men by the advantages and opportunities they enjoy; there are those that sit in darkness in a land of light, that live in sin even in a holy land, that are bad in the best places.

2. Their *will*s were *stubborn*, and *unapt to submit to the rules of the divine law*; (v. 23.) *This people has a revolting and rebellious heart*; and no wonder, when they were *foolish and without understanding*, Ps. lxxxiii. 5. Nay, it is the corrupt bias of the will, that bribes and besots the understanding: none so blind as those that will not see. The character of *this people* is the true character of *all people* by nature, till the grace of God has wrought a change; we are *foolish*, slow of understanding, and apt to mistake and forget; yet that is not the worst; we have a *revolting and a rebellious heart*, a carnal mind, that is enmity against God, and is not in subjection to his law; not only *revolting* from him by a rooted aversion to that which is good, but *rebellious* against him by a strong inclination to that which is evil. Observe, The *revolting heart* is a *rebellious* one: they that withdraw from their allegiance to God, stick not there, but by siding in with sin and Satan take up arms against him. They are *revolted and gone*. The *revolting heart* will produce a *revolting life*; *They are gone*, and *they will go*; (so it may be read;) now *nothing will be restrained from them*, Gen. xi. 6.

II. He ascribed this to the want of the fear of God. When he observes them to be *without understanding*, he asks, "*Fear ye not me, saith the Lord, and will ye not tremble at my presence?*" v. 22. If you would but keep up an awe of God, you would be more observant of what he says to you; and did you but understand yourselves better, you would be more under the commanding rule of God's fear." When he observes that *they are revolted and gone*, he adds this, as the root and cause of their apostacy, (v. 24.) *Neither say they in their hearts, Let us now fear the Lord our God. Therefore so many bad thoughts come into their mind, and hurry them to that which is evil, because they will not admit and entertain good thoughts; and particularly not this good thought, Let us now fear the Lord our God.* It is true, it is God's work to put his fear into our hearts; but it is our work to stir up ourselves to fear him, and to fasten upon those considerations which are proper to affect us with a holy awe of him; and it is because we do not do this, that our hearts are so destitute of his fear as they are, and so apt to *revolt and rebel*.

III. He suggests some of those things which are proper to possess us with a holy fear of God.

1. We must *fear the Lord and his greatness*; (v. 22.) upon this account he demands our fear: *Shall we not tremble at his presence*, and be afraid of affronting him, or trifling with him, who in the kingdom of nature and providence gives such incontestable proofs of his almighty power and sovereign dominion? Here is one instance given of very many that might be given; he keeps the sea within compass: though the tides flow with a mighty strength, twice every day, and if they should flow on for awhile, would drown the world; though in a storm the billows rise high, and dash to the shore with incredible force and fury, yet they are under check, they return, they retire, and no harm is done. *This is the Lord's doing*, and it would be *marvellous*, if it were not common, in *our eyes*. He has *placed the sand for the bound of the sea*, not only for a *meerstone*, to mark out how far it may come, and where it must stop, but as a *mound*, or fence, to put a stop to it. A wall of sand shall be as effectual as a wall of brass to check the flowing waves, when God is pleased to make it so; nay, that is chosen rather to teach us that a *soft answer* like the *soft sand*, turns away wrath, and quiets a foaming rage, when *grievous words*, like hard rocks, do but exasperate, and make the *waters cast forth* so much the more *mire and dirt*. This bound is *placed by a perpetual decree*; by an ordinance of antiquity—so some read it, and then it sends us as far back as to the creation of the world, when God divided between the sea and the dry land, and fixed marches between them, (Gen. i. 9, 10.) which is elegantly described, Ps. civ. 6, 8c. and Job xxxviii. 8, 8c. or to the period of Noah's flood, when God promised that he would never drown the world again, Gen. ix. 11. An ordinance of *perpetuity*—so our translation takes it. It is a *perpetual decree*, it has had its effect all along to this day, and shall still continue till day and night come to an end. This *perpetual decree* the waters of the sea cannot pass over or break through. *Though the waves thereof toss themselves*, as the troubled sea does when it cannot rest, yet *can they not prevail*: though they roar and rage as if they were vexed at the check given them, yet *can they not pass over*. Now this is a good reason why we should fear God. For, (1.) By this we see that he is a God of almighty power and universal sovereignty, and therefore to be feared and had in reverence. (2.) This shows us how easily he could drown the world again, and how much we continually lie at his mercy, and therefore we should be afraid of making him our Enemy. (3.) Even the unruly waves of the sea observe his decree, and retreat at his check; and shall not we then? Why are our *hearts revolting and rebellious*, when the sea neither *revolts nor rebels*?

2. We must *fear the Lord and his goodness*, Hos. iii. 5. The instances of this, as of the former, are fetched from God's common providence; (v. 24.) we must *fear the Lord our God*, we must worship him, and give him glory, and be always in care to keep ourselves in his love, because he is continually doing us good; he gives us both the *former and the latter rain*; the *former* a little after seedtime, the *latter* a little before harvest, and both in *their season*; and by this means he *reserves to us the appointed weeks of harvest*. Harvest is reckoned by weeks, because in a few weeks enough is gathered to serve for sustenance the year round. The *weeks of the harvest are appointed* us by the promise of God, that *seed-time and harvest shall not fail*. And in performance of that promise they are *reserved to us* by the Divine Providence, otherwise we should come short of them. In *harvest-mercies* therefore God is to be acknowledged, his power, and goodness, and faith

fulness, for they all come from him. And it is a good reason why we should *fear him*, that we may keep ourselves in his love, because we have such a necessary dependence upon him. The *fruitful seasons* were witnesses for God, even to the heathen world, sufficient to leave them inexcusable in their contempt of him; (Acts xiv. 17.) and yet the Jews, who had the written word to explain their testimony *av*, were not wrought upon to *fear the Lord*, though it appears how much it is our interest to do so.

25. Your iniquities have turned away these *things*, and your sins have withholden good *things* from you. 26. For among my people are found wicked *men*: they lay wait as he that setteth snares: they set a trap, they catch men. 27. As a cage is full of birds, so *are* their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. 28. They are waxen fat, they shine; yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge. 29. Shall I not visit for these *things*? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? 30. A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; 31. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to *have it so*: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

Here,

I. The prophet shows them what mischief their sins had done them; they have *turned away these things*, (v. 25.) *the former and the latter rain*, which they used to have in *due season*, (v. 24.) but which had of late been withheld, (ch. iii. 3.) by reason of which the *appointed weeks* of harvest had sometimes *disappointed* them. "It is your *sin* that has withholden good from you, when God was ready to bestow it upon you." Note, It is sin that stops the current of God's favours to us, and deprives us of the blessings we used to receive. It is that which makes the heavens as brass and the earth as iron.

II. He shows them how great their sins were, how heinous and provoking. When they had forsaken the worship of the true God, even moral honesty was lost among them; *Among my people are found wicked men*, (v. 26.) some of the worst of men, and so much the worse they were, inasmuch as they were found among *God's people*.

1. They were spiteful and malicious. Such are properly *wicked men*, men that delight in doing mischief; they were *found*, caught in the very act of their wickedness; as hunters or fowlers lay snares for their game, so did they *lie in wait to catch men*; and made a sport of it, and took as much pleasure in it, as if they had been entrapping beasts or birds. They contrived ways of doing mischief to good people, (whom they hated for their goodness,) especially to those that faithfully *reproved* them; (Isa. xxix. 21.) or to those that stood in the way of their preferment, or that they supposed to have affronted them, or done them a diskindness; or to those whose estates they coveted; so Jezebel snared Naboth for his vineyard. Nay, they did mischief for mischief-sake.

2. They were false and treacherous: (v. 27.) *As a cage, or coop, is full of birds, and of food for*

them to fatten them for the table, so are *their houses full of deceit*, of wealth gotten by fraudulent practices, or of arts and methods of defrauding. All the business of their families is done with deceit; whoever deals with them, they will cheat him if they can; which is easily done by those who make no conscience of what they say and do. Hence *they overpass the deeds of the wicked*, v. 28. Those that act by *deceit*, with a colour of law and justice, do more mischief perhaps than those *wicked men*, (v. 26.) that carried all before them by open force and violence; or, They are worse than the heathen themselves, yea, the worst of them. And would you think it? They *prosper* in these wicked courses, and therefore their hearts are hardened in them. They are greedy of the world, because they find it flows in upon them, and they stick not at any wickedness in pursuit of it, because they find that it is so far from hindering their prosperity, that it furthers it. *They are become great* in the world, they are *waxen rich*, and thrive upon it. They have wherewithal to make provision for the flesh to fulfil all the lusts of it, to which they are very indulgent, so that *they are waxen fat* with living at ease, and bathing themselves in all the delights of sense; they are sleek and smooth; they *shine*, they look fair and gay; every body admires them. And they *pass by matters of evil*, (so some read the following words,) they escape the evils which one would expect their sins should bring upon them; *they are not in trouble as other men*, much less as we might expect bad men, Ps. lxxiii. 5, &c.

3. When they were grown great, and had got power in their hands, they did not do that good with it which they ought to have done; *They judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, and the right of the needy*. The *fatherless* are often *needy*, always need assistance and advice, and advantage is taken of their helpless condition to do them an injury. Who should succour them then but the *great and rich*? What have men wealth for, but to do good with it? But these would take no cognizance of any such distressed cases: they had not so much sense of justice, or compassion for the injured; or, if they did concern themselves in the cause, it was not to *do right*, but to protect them that *did wrong*. And yet they prosper still, *God layeth not folly to them*. Certainly then the things of this world are not the *best things*, for often the worst men have the most of them; yet we are not to think that, because they prosper, God allows of their practices. No, though sentence against their evil works be not *executed speedily*, it will be *executed*.

4. There was a general corruption of all orders and degrees of men among them; (v. 30, 31.) *A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land*. The degeneracy of such a people, so privileged and advanced, was a *wonderful thing*. How could they ever break through so many obligations? It was a *horrible thing*, and to be *detested*, and the consequences of it *dreaded*. To frighten ourselves from sin, let us call it a *horrible thing*. What was the matter? In short, this: [1.] The leaders misled the people: *The prophets prophesy falsely*, counterfeit a commission from heaven, when they are factors for hell. Religion is never more dangerously attacked than under colour and pretence of divine revelation. But why did not the priests, who had power in their hands for that purpose, restrain these false prophets? Alas! instead of doing that, they made use of them as the tools of their ambition and tyranny; they *bare rule by their means*; they supported themselves in their grandeur and wealth, their laziness and luxury, their impositions and oppressions, by the help of the *false prophets*, and their interest in the people. Thus they were in a combination against every thing that was good, and

strengthened one another's hands in evil. (2.) The people were well enough pleased to be misled; "They are *my* people," says God, "and should have stood up *for me*, and borne their testimony against the wickedness of their priests and prophets; but they *love to have it so*." If the priests and prophets will let them alone in *their* sins, they will give them no disturbance in *theirs*. They love to be ridden with a loose rein, and like those *rulers* very well that will not *restrain* their lusts, and those *teachers* that will not *reprove* them.

III. He shows them how fatal the consequences of this would certainly be. Let them consider,

1. What the *reckoning* would be for their wickedness; (v. 29.) *Shall not I visit for these things?* as before, v. 9. Sometimes mercy rejoices against judgment; *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* Here, judgment is reasoning against mercy; *Shall I not visit?* We are sure that Infinite Wisdom knows how to accommodate the matter between them. The manner of expression is very emphatical, and speaks, (1.) The certainty and necessity of God's judgments; *Shall not my soul be avenged?* Yes, without doubt, vengeance will come, it must come, if the sinner repents not. (2.) The justice and equity of God's judgments; he appeals to the sinner's own conscience; Do not they deserve to be punished, that have been guilty of such abominations? Shall he not be *avenged on such a nation*, such a wicked, provoking nation as this?

2. What the direct tendency of their wickedness was: *What will you do in the end thereof?* That is, (1.) "What a *hitch of wickedness* will you come to at last! *What will you do?* What will you not do that is base and wicked; What will this grow to? You will certainly grow worse and worse, till you have filled up the measure of your iniquity." (2.) "What a *fit of destruction* will you come to at last! When things are brought to such a pass as this, as nothing can be expected from you but a deluge of sin, so nothing can be expected from God but a deluge of wrath; and what will ye do when that comes?" Note, Those that walk in bad ways, would do well to consider the tendency of them both to *greater sin and utter ruin*. *An end will come*, the end of a wicked life will come, when it will be called over again, and without doubt will be bitterness in the latter end.

CHAP. VI.

In this chapter, as before, we have, I. A prophecy of the invading of the land of Judah, and the besieging of Jerusalem by the Chaldean army, (v. 1..6.) with the spoils which they should make of the country, (v. 9.) and the terror which all should be seized with on that occasion, v. 22..26. II. An account of those sins of Judah and Jerusalem, which provoked God to bring this desolating judgment upon them. Their oppression; (v. 7.) their contempt of the word of God; (v. 10..12.) their worldliness; (v. 13.) the treachery of their prophets; (v. 14.) their impudence in sin; (v. 15.) their obstinacy against reproofs, v. 18, 19. These made their sacrifices unacceptable to him, (v. 20.) and for these he gave them up to ruin, v. 21. He tried them first, (v. 27.) and then rejected them as irreclaimable, v. 28..30. III. Good counsel given them in the midst of all this, but in vain, v. 8, 16, 17.

1. **O** YE children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Beth-hacerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction. 2. I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman. 3. The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her: they shall pitch

their tents against her round about; they shall feed every one in his place. 4. Prepare ye war against her; arise, and let us go up at noon. Wo unto us! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out. 5. Arise, and let us go by night, and let us destroy her palaces. 6. For thus hath the LORD of hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this is the city to be visited; she is wholly oppression in the midst of her. 7. As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually is grief and wounds. 8. Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.

Here is,

I. Judgment threatened against Judah and Jerusalem; the city and the country, which were at this time secure, and under no apprehension of danger; they saw no cloud gathering, but every thing looked safe and serene: but the prophet tells them that they shall shortly be invaded by a foreign power, an army shall be brought against them *from the north*, which shall lay all waste, and shall cause not only a general consternation, but a general desolation. It is here foretold,

1. That the alarm of this should be loud and terrible. This is represented, v. 1. The children of Benjamin, in which tribe part of Jerusalem lay, are here called to shift for their own safety in the country; for the city (to which it was first thought advisable for them to flee, *ch. iv. 5, 6.*) would soon be made too hot for them, and they would find it the wisest course to flee out of the midst of it. It is common, in public frights, for people to think any place safer than that in which they are; and therefore those in the city are for shifting into the country, in hopes there to escape *out of danger*, and those in the country are for shifting into the city, in hopes there to make head *against the danger*; but it is all in vain, when *evil pursues sinners* with commission. They are bid to send the alarm into the country, and to do what they could for their own safety; *Blow the trumpet in Tekoa*, a city which lay twelve miles north from Jerusalem. Let them be stirred up to stand upon their guard; *Set up a sign of fire*, that is, kindle the beacons in *Beth-hacerem*, the *house of the vineyard*, which lay on a hill between Jerusalem and Tekoa. Prepare to make a vigorous resistance, for the *evil appears out of the north*. This may be taken ironically; "Be-take yourselves to the best methods you can think of for your own preservation, but all shall be *in vain*; for when you have done your best, it will be a great *destruction*, for it is in vain to contend with God's judgments."

2. That the attempt upon them should be bold and formidable, and such as they should be a very unequal match for. (1.) See what *the daughter of Zion* is, on whom the assault is made; she is *likened to a comely and delicate woman*, (v. 2.) bred up in every thing that is nice and soft, that will not set so much as the *sole of her foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy*, (Deut. xxviii. 56.) nor suffer the wind to blow upon her; and, not being accustomed to hardship, she will be the less able either to *resist the enemy*, (for those that make war must *endure hardness*;) or to bear the destruction with

that patience which is necessary to make it tolerable. The more we indulge ourselves in the pleasures of this life, the more we disfit ourselves for the troubles of this life. (2.) See what the *daughter of Babylon* is, by whom the assault is made. The generals and their armies are compared to shepherds and their flocks; (v. 3.) in such numbers and in such order did they come, the soldiers following their leaders, as the sheep their shepherds. The daughter of Zion dwelt at home, (so some read it,) expecting to be courted with love, but was invaded with fury. This comparing of the enemies to shepherds, inclines me to embrace another reading, which some give of v. 2. The daughter of Zion is like a *comely pasture-ground, and a delicate land* which invite the shepherds to bring their flocks thither to graze; and as the shepherds easily make themselves masters of an open field, which (as was then usual in some parts) lies *common*, owned by none, *pitch their tents* in it, and their flocks quickly eat it bare; so shall the Chaldean army easily break in upon the land of Judah, force for themselves a free quarter where they please, and in a little time devour all.

For the further illustration of this, he shows,

[1.] How God shall *commission* them to make this destruction even of the holy land and the holy city, that were his peculiar. It is he that says, (v. 4.) *Prepare ye war against her*; for he is the *Lord of hosts*, that has *all hosts* at his command, and he has said, (v. 6.) *Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem*, in order to the attacking of it. The Chaldeans have *great power* against Judah and Jerusalem, and yet they have no power but what is *given them from above*. God has marked out Jerusalem for destruction; he has said, "*This is the city to be visited*, visited in wrath, visited by the divine justice, and this is the time of her visitation." The day is coming, when those that are careless and secure in sinful ways, will be visited.

[2.] How they shall animate themselves and one another to execute that commission. God's counsels being against Jerusalem, which cannot be altered or disannulled, the councils of war which the enemies held are made to agree with his counsels. God having said, *Prepare war against her*, their determinations are made subservient to his; and notwithstanding the distance of place, and the many difficulties that lay in the way, it is soon resolved *nemine contradicente—unanimously, Arise, and let us go*. Note, It is good to see how the counsel and decree of God are pursued and executed in the devices and designs of men, even theirs that know him not, Isa. x. 6, 7. In this campaign, *First*, They resolved to be very expeditious. They have no sooner resolved upon it, than they address themselves to it; it shall never be said that they left any thing to be done towards it *to-morrow*, which they could do *to-day*; *Arise, let us go up at noon*, though it be in the heat of the day; nay, (v. 5.) *Arise, let us go up by night*, though it be in the dark; nothing shall hinder them, they are resolved to *lose no time*. They are described as men in care to make despatch, (v. 4.) "*Wo unto us, for the day goes away, and we are not going on with our work; the shadows of the evening are stretched out, and we sit still, and let slip the opportunity.*" O that we were thus eager in our spiritual work and warfare, thus afraid of losing time, or any opportunity, taking the *kingdom of heaven by violence*! It is folly to trifle when we have an eternal salvation to *work out*, and the enemies of that salvation to fight against. *Secondly*, They confidently expect to be very successful; "*Let us go up, and let us destroy her palaces, and make ourselves masters of the wealth that is in them.*" It was not that they might

fulfil God's counsels, but that they might fill their own treasures, that they were thus eager; yet God thereby served his own purposes.

II. The cause of this judgment assigned. It is all for their wickedness; they have brought it upon themselves; they must bear it, for they must bear the blame of it; they are thus oppressed, because they have been oppressors; they have dealt hardly with one another, each in their turns, as they have had power and advantage, and now the enemy shall come, and deal hardly with them all. This sin of oppression, and violence, and wrong-doing, is here charged upon them, 1. As a national sin; (v. 6.) *Therefore this city is to be visited*, it is time to make inquisition, for *she is wholly oppression in the midst of her*. All orders and degrees of men, from the prince on the throne to the meanest master of a shop, were oppressive to those that were under them. Look which way you will, there were causes for complaints of this kind. 2. As a sin that was become in a manner natural to them; (v. 7.) *She casts out wickedness* in all the instances of malice and mischievousness, *as a fountain casts out her waters*, as plentifully and constantly; the streams bitter and poisonous, like the fountain. The waters out of the fountain will not be restrained, but will find or force their way, nor will they be checked by laws or conscience in their violent proceedings. This is fitly applied to the corrupt heart of man in his natural state; it *casts out wickedness*, one *evil imagination* or other, as a fountain casts out her waters, naturally and easily; it is always flowing, and yet always full. 3. As that which was become a constant practice with them, *Violence and spoil are heard in her*. The cry of it is come up before God, as that of Sodom; *Before me continually are grief and wounds*—the complaint of those that find themselves aggrieved, being unjustly wounded in their bodies or spirits, in their estates or reputation. Note, He that is the common Parent of mankind, regards and resents, and sooner or later will revenge the mischiefs and wrongs that men do to one another.

III. The counsel given them, how to prevent this judgment. Fair warning is given, now upon the whole matter; "*Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem*, v. 8. Receive the instruction given thee both by the law of God and by his prophets; be wise at length for thyself." They knew very well what they had been instructed to do; nothing remained but to do it, for till then they could not be said to be instructed. The reason for this counsel is taken from the inevitable ruin they ran upon, if they refused to comply with the instructions given them; *lest my soul depart*, or be *disjoined*, from thee. This intimates what a tender affection and concern God had had for them; his very soul had been joined to them, and nothing but sin could disjoin it. Note, 1. The God of mercy is loath to depart even from a provoking people, and is earnest with them, by true repentance and reformation to prevent things coming to that extremity. 2. Their case is very miserable from whom God's soul is disjoined; it intimates the loss not only of their outward blessings, but of those comforts and favours which are the more immediate and peculiar tokens of his love and presence. Compare this with that dreadful word, Heb. x. 38. *If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him*. 3. Those whom God forsakes are certainly undone; when God's soul departs from Jerusalem, she soon becomes desolate and uninhabited, Matth. xxiii. 38.

9. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine: turn back thy hand as a grape-ga-

therer into the baskets. 10. To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear *is* uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD *is* unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it. 11. Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together; for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with *him that is* full of days. 12. And their houses shall be turned unto others, *with their fields and wives together*: for I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD. 13. For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them, every one *is* given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely. 14. They have healed also the hurt *of the daughter of my people* slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace. 15. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time *that* I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD. 16. Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*. 17. Also I set watchmen over you, *saying*, Harken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.

The heads of this paragraph are the very same with those of the last; for precept must be upon precept, and line upon line.

1. The ruin of Judah and Jerusalem is here threatened. We had before the *haste* which the Chaldean army made *to the war*; (v. 4, 5.) now here we have the *havock* made *by the war*. How lamentable are the desolations here described! The enemy shall so long quarter among them, and be so insatiable in their thirst after blood and treasure, that they shall seize all they can meet with, and what escapes them one time, shall fall into their hands another; (v. 9.) *They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel, as a vine, as the grape-gatherer*, who is resolved to leave none behind, still *turns back his hand into the baskets*, to put more in, till he has gathered all; so shall they be picked up by the enemy, though *dispersed*, though *hid*, and none of them shall escape their eye and hand. Perhaps the people, being *given to covetousness*, (v. 13.) had not observed that law of God, which forbade them to *glean all their grapes*; (Lev. xix. 10.) and now they themselves shall be in like manner *thoroughly gleaned*, and shall either fall by the sword or go into captivity. This is explained, v. 11, 12. where God's *fury* and his *hand* are said to be *poured out* and *stretched out*, in the fury and by the hand of the Chaldeans; for even wicked men are often made use of as *God's hand*, (Ps. xvii. 14.)

and in their *anger* we may see God *angry*. Now see on whom the *fury* is *poured out* in full phials; *upon the children abroad, or in the streets*, where they are playing; (Zech. viii. 5.) or whether they run out innocently to look about them; the sword of the merciless Chaldeans shall not spare them, *ch. ix. 21*. The children perish in the calamity which the fathers' sins have procured. The execution shall likewise reach the *assembly of young men*, their merry meetings, their clubs which they keep up to strengthen one another's hands in wickedness, they shall be *cut off together*. Nor shall these only fall into the enemies' hands, who meet for lewdness; (*ch. v. 7*.) but *even the husband with the wife shall be taken*, these *two in bed together*, and neither *left*, but both *taken* prisoners. And as they have no compassion for the *weak* but *fair* sex, so they have none for *decrepit* but *venerable* age; *the old with the full of days*, whose deaths can contribute no more to their *safety* than their lives to their *service*, who are not in a capacity to do them either good or harm, they shall be either *cut off* or *carried off*. Their *houses* shall then be *turned to others*, (v. 12.) the conquerors shall dwell in their habitations, use their goods, and live upon their stores; their *fields and wives* shall fall together into their hands as was threatened, Deut. xxviii. 30, &c. For God *stretches out his hand upon the inhabitants of the land*, and none can go out of the reach of it.

Now as to this denunciation of God's wrath, 1. The prophet *justifies himself* in preaching thus *terribly*, for herein he *dealt faithfully*; (v. 11.) "*I am full of the fury of the Lord*, full of the thoughts and apprehensions of it, and am carried out with a powerful impulse, by the spirit of prophecy, to speak of it thus vehemently." He took no delight in threatening, nor was it any pleasure to him with such sermons as these to make those about him *un-easy*; but he could not contain himself, he was *weary with holding in*; he suppressed it as long as he could, as long as he durst, but he was so *full of power by the spirit of the Lord of hosts*, that he must speak, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. Note, When ministers preach the terrors of the Lord according to the scripture, we have no reason to be displeased at them; for they are but messengers, and must deliver their message, pleasing or displeasing. 2. He *condemns* the false prophets, who preached *plausibly*, for therein they flattered people, and dealt *unfaithfully*, v. 13, 14. *The priest and the prophet*, who should be their watchmen and monitors, have *dealt falsely*, have not been true to their trust, nor told the people their faults and the danger they were in; they should have been their physicians, but they murdered their patients by letting them have their wills, and giving them every thing they had a mind to, and flattering them into an opinion that they were in no danger; (v. 14.) They have *healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly*, or, according to the *cure of some slight hurt*; skinning over the wound, and never searching it to the bottom; applying lenitives only, when there was need of corrosives; soothing people in their sins, and giving them opiates, to make them easy for the present, while the disease was preying upon their vitals. They said, "*Peace, peace*, all shall be well." If there were some thinking people among them, who were awake, and apprehensive of danger, they soon stopped their mouths with their priestly and prophetic authority, boldly averring that neither church nor state was in any danger, when *there is no peace*, because they went on in their idolatries and daring impieties. Note, Those are to be reckoned our false friends, that is, our worst and most dangerous enemies, who flatter us in a sinful way.

II. The sin of Judah and Jerusalem is here dis-

covered, which provoked God to bring this ruin upon them, and justified him in it.

1. They would by no means bear to be told of their faults, nor of the danger they were in. God bids the prophet give them warning of the judgment coming, v. 9. "But," says he, "*to whom shall I speak, and give warning?* I cannot find out any that will so much as give me a *patient hearing*. I may give warning long enough, but there is nobody that will take warning. I cannot speak, that they may hear, cannot speak to any purpose, or with any hope of success; for their ear is *uncircumcised*, it is carnal and fleshly, indisposed to receive the voice of God, so that they cannot hearken. They have, as it were, a thick skin grown over the organs of hearing, so that divine things might to as much purpose be spoken to a stone as to them. Nay, they are not only deaf to it, but prejudiced against it; therefore they cannot hear, because they are resolved that they will not." The word of the Lord is unto them a reproach. Both the reproofs and the threatenings of the word are so; they reckon themselves wronged and affronted by both, and resent the prophet's plain-dealing with them, as they would the most causeless slander and calumny. This was kicking against the pricks, (Acts ix. 5.) as the lawyers against the word of Christ; (Luke xi. 45.) Thus saying, thou reproachest us also. Note, These reproofs that are counted reproaches, and hated as such, will certainly be turned into the heaviest woes. When it is here said, *They have no delight in the word*, more is implied than is expressed; they have an antipathy to it, their hearts rise at it; it exasperates them, and enrages their corruptions, and they are ready to fly in the face, and pull out the eyes, of their reprovers. And how can those expect that the word of the Lord should speak any comfort to them, who have no delight in it, but would rather be any where than within hearing of it?

2. They were inordinately set upon the world, and wholly carried away by the love of it; (v. 13.) *From the least of them even to the greatest*, old and young, rich and poor, high and low, those of all ranks, professions, and employments, every one is given to covetousness, greedy of filthy lucre, all for what they can get, *per fas per nefas*—right or wrong; and this made them oppressive and violent, (v. 6, 7.) for of that evil, as well as others, the love of money is the bitter root. Nay, and this hardened their hearts against the word of God and his prophets; they were the covetous Pharisees that derided Christ, Luke xvi. 14.

3. They were become impudent in sin, and past shame. After such a high charge of flagrant crimes proved upon them, it was very proper to ask, (v. 15.) *Were they ashamed, when they had committed all these abominations*, which are such a reproach to their reason and religion? *Did they blush at the conviction, and acknowledge that confusion of face belonged to them?* If so, there is some hope of them yet. But, alas! there did not appear so much as this colour of virtue among them; their hearts were so hardened, that they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush, they had so brazened their faces. They even gloried in their wickedness, and openly confronted the convictions which should have humbled them, and brought them to repentance. They resolved to face it out against God himself, and not to own their guilt. Some refer it to the priests and prophets, who had healed the people slightly, and told them that they should have peace, and yet were not ashamed of their treachery and falsehood, no, not when the event disproved them, and gave them the lie. Those that are shameless are graceless, and their case hopeless. But they that will not

submit to a penitential shame, nor take that to themselves as their due, shall not escape an utter ruin; for so it follows, *Therefore they shall fall among them that fall*, they shall have their portion with those that are quite undone; and when God visits the nation in wrath, they shall be sure to be cast down, and be made to tremble, because they would not blush. Note, Those that sin, and cannot blush for it, shall find that it is bad with them now, and that it will be worse with them shortly. At first, they hardened themselves, and would not blush, afterward, they were so hardened, that they could not. *Quod unum habant in malis bonum perdunt, peccandi verecundiam*—They have lost the only good property which once blended itself with many bad ones, that is, shame for having done amiss. Senec. de Vit. Beat.

III. They are put in mind of the good counsel which had been often given them, but in vain. They had a great deal said to them to little purpose,

1. By way of advice concerning their duty, v. 16. God had been used to say to them, *Stand in the ways and see*. That is, (1.) He would have them to consider, not to proceed rashly, but to do as travellers in the road, who are in care to find the right way which will bring them to their journey's end, and therefore pause and inquire for it. If they have any reason to think that they have missed their way, they are not easy till they have got satisfaction. O that men would be thus wise for their souls, and would ponder the path of their feet, as those that believe lawful and unlawful are of no less consequence to us than the right way and the wrong are to a traveller! (2.) He would have them to consult antiquity, the observations and experiences of those that went before them; "Ask for the old paths; inquire of the former age; (Job viii. 8.) ask thy father, thy elders; (Deut. xxxii. 7.) and thou wilt find that the way of godliness and righteousness has always been the way which God has owned and blessed, and in which men have prospered. Ask for the old paths, the paths prescribed by the law of God, the written word, that true standard of antiquity. Ask for the paths that the patriarchs travelled in before you, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; and, as you hope to inherit the promises made to them, tread in their steps. Ask for the old paths; Where is the good way?" We must not be guided merely by antiquity, as if the plea of prescription and long usage were alone sufficient to justify our path; no, there is an old way which wicked men have trodden, Job xxii. 15. But when we ask for the old paths, it is only in order to find out the good way, the highway of the upright. Note, The way of religion and godliness is a good old way; the way that all the saints in all ages have walked in. (3.) He would have them to resolve to act according to the result of these inquiries; "When you have found out which is the good way, walk therein; practise accordingly, keep close to that way, proceed and persevere in it." Some make this counsel to be given them with reference to the struggles that were between the true and false prophets, between those that said they should have peace, and those that told them trouble was at the door; they pretended they knew not which to believe; "Stand in the way," says God, "and see, and inquire, which of these two agrees with the written word, and the usual methods of God's providence, which of these directs you to the good way, and do accordingly." (4.) He assures them, that if they do thus, it will secure the welfare and satisfaction of their own souls; "Walk in the good old way, and you will find that your walking in that way will be easy and pleasant; you will enjoy both your God and yourselves, and the way will lead you to true rest. Though it cost you some pains to walk

in that way, you will find an abundant recompense at your journey's end." (5.) He laments that this good counsel, which was so rational in itself, and so proper for them, could not find acceptance; "*But they said, We will not walk therein.* Not only we will not be at the pains to inquire *which is the good way, the good old way*; but when it is told us, and we have nothing to say to the contrary but that it is the right way, yet we will not deny ourselves and our humours so far as to *walk in it.*" Thus multitudes are ruined for ever by downright wilfulness.

2. By way of admonition concerning their danger. Because they would not be ruled by fair reasoning, God takes another method with them; by *lesser judgments* he threatens *greater*, and sends his prophets to give them this explication of them, and to frighten them with an apprehension of the danger they were in; (v. 17.) *Also I set watchmen over you.* God's ministers are watchmen, and it is a great mercy to have them *set over us* in the Lord. Now observe here, (1.) The fair warning given by these watchmen. This was the burthen of their song, they cried again and again, *Hearken to the sound of the trumpet.* God, in his providence, sounds the trumpet; (Zech. ix. 14.) the watchmen hear it themselves and are affected with it, (Jer. iv. 19.) and they are to call upon others to *hearken* to it too, to *hear the Lord's controversy*, to observe the voice of Providence, to improve it, and answer the intentions of it. (2.) This fair warning slighted; "*But they said, We will not hearken*; we will not hear, we will not heed, we will not believe; the prophets may as well save themselves and us the trouble. The reason why sinners perish is, because they *do not hearken to the sound of the trumpet*; and the reason why they *do not*, is, because they *will not*; and they have no reason to give *why* they will not, but *because* they will not, that is, they are herein most unreasonable. One may more easily deal with *ten men's reasons*, than *one man's will*."

18. Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. 19. Hear, O earth; behold, I will bring evil upon this people, *even* the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it. 20. To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country! your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me. 21. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbour and his friend shall perish. 22. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth. 23. They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they *are* cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion. 24. We have heard the fame thereof; our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, *and* pain as of a woman in travail. 25. Go not forth into the field,

nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy *and* fear is on every side. 26. O daughter of my people, gird *thee* with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes; make thee mourning *as for* an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us. 27. I have set thee *for* a tower *and* a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way. 28. They *are* all grievous revolvers, walking with slanders: *they are* brass and iron; they *are* all corrupters. 29. The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away. 30. Reprobate silver shall *men* call them, because the LORD hath rejected them.

Here,

1. God appeals to all the neighbours, nay, to the whole world, concerning the equity of his proceedings against Judah and Jerusalem; (v. 18, 19.) "*Hear, ye nations, and know* particularly, *O congregation* of the mighty, the great men of the nations, that take cognizance of the affairs of the states about you, and make remarks upon them. Observe now *what* is doing *among them* of Judah and Jerusalem; you hear of the desolations brought upon them, the earth rings of it, trembles under it; you all wonder that *I* should *bring evil upon this people*, that are in covenant with me, that profess relation to me, that have worshipped me, and been highly favoured by me; you are ready to ask, *Wherefore has the Lord done thus to this land?* (Deut. xxix. 24.) Know then," 1. "That it is the natural product of their devices. The evil brought upon them is the *fruit of their thought*. They *thought* to strengthen themselves by their alliance with foreigners, and by that very thing they weakened and diminished themselves, they betrayed and exposed themselves." 2. "That it is the just punishment of their disobedience and rebellion. God does but execute upon them the curse of the law for their violation of its commands. It is because *they have not hearkened to my words, nor to my law*, nor regarded a word I have said to them, but rejected it all. They would never have been ruined thus by the judgments of God's *hand*, if they had refused to be ruled by the judgments of his *mouth*: therefore you cannot say that they have any wrong done them."

II. God rejects their plea, by which they insisted upon their external services as sufficient to atone for all their sins. Alas! it is a frivolous plea; (v. 20.) "*To what purpose come there to me incense, and sweet cane*, to be burned for a perfume on the golden altar, though it was the best of the kind, and far-fetched? What care I for *your burnt-offerings and your sacrifices?*" They not only cannot *profit* God, (no sacrifice does, Ps. i. 9.) but they do not *please* him, for none does but the sacrifices of the upright; that of the wicked is an *abomination to him*. Sacrifice and incense were appointed to excite their repentance, and to direct them to a Mediator, and assist their faith in him. Where this good use was made of them, *they were acceptable*, God had respect to them and to those that offered them. But when they were offered with an opinion that thereby they made God their Debtor, and purchased a license to go on in sin, they were so far from being pleasing to God, that they were a provocation to him.

III. He foretells the desolation that was now coming upon them. 1. God designs their ruin because they hate to be reformed; (*v. 21.*) *I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people*, occasions of falling, not into sin, but into trouble. Those whom God has marked for destruction he perplexes and embarrasses in their counsels, and obstructs and retards all the methods they take for their own safety. The parties of the enemy, which they met with wherever they went, were *stumbling-blocks to them*, in every corner they stumbled upon them, and were dashed to pieces by them; *The fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them*; neither the fathers with their wisdom, nor the sons with their strength and courage, shall escape them, or get over them. The sons that sinned with their fathers, fall with them. *Even the neighbour and his friend shall perish*, and not be able to help either themselves or one another. 2. He will make use of the Chaldeans as instruments of it; for whatever work God has to do, he will find out proper instruments for the doing of it. This is a people fetched from the north, from the sides of the earth. Babylon itself lay a great way off northward; and some of the countries that were subject to the king of Babylon, out of which his army was levied, lay much further. These must be employed in his service, *v. 22, 23.* For, (1.) It is a people very numerous, a *great nation*, which will make their invasion the more formidable. (2.) It is a *warlike* people; *they lay hold on bow and spear*, and at this time know how to use them, for they are used to them; *they ride upon horses*, and therefore they march the more swiftly, and in battle press the harder. No nation had yet brought into the field a better cavalry than the Chaldeans. (3.) It is a *barbarous people*; they are *cruel*, and *have no mercy*, being greedy of prey, and flushed with victory. They take a pride in frightening all about them; their voice *roars like the sea*. And, *lastly*, They have a particular design upon Judah and Jerusalem, in hopes greatly to enrich themselves with the spoil of that famous country. They are *set in array against thee, O daughter of Zion*. The sins of God's professing people make them an easy prey to those that are God's enemies as well as theirs.

IV. He describes the very great consternation which Judah and Jerusalem should be in, upon the approach of this formidable enemy, *v. 24.—26.* 1. They own themselves in a fright, upon the first intelligence brought them of the approach of the enemy; "*When we have but heard the fame thereof, our hands wax feeble*, and we have no heart to make any resistance; *anguish has taken hold of us*, and we are immediately in an extremity of pain, like that of a woman in travail." Note, Sense of guilt quite dispirits men, upon the approach of any threatening trouble. What can they hope to do for themselves, who have made God their Enemy? 2. They confine themselves by consent to their houses, not daring to show their heads abroad, for though they could not but expect that the sword of the enemy would at last find them out there, yet they would rather die tamely and meanly there than run any venture, either by fight or flight, to help themselves. Thus they say one to another, "*Go not forth into the field*, no not to fetch in your provision thence, *nor walk by the way*; dare not to go to church or market, it is at your peril if you do, for *the sword of the enemy*, and the fear of it, is *on every side*; the *highways are unoccupied*, as in Jael's time," *Judg. v. 6.* Let this remind us, when we travel the roads in safety, and there is none to make us afraid, to bless God for our share in the public tranquillity. 3. The prophet calls upon them sadly to lament the desolations that were coming upon them. He was himself the lamenting prophet,

and called upon his people to join with him in his lamentations; "*O daughter of my people*, hear thy God calling thee to weeping and mourning, and answer his call: do not only put on sackcloth for a day, but *gird it on* for thy constant wear; do not only put ashes on thy head, but *wallow thyself in ashes*; put thyself into close mourning, and use all the tokens of bitter lamentation, not forced and for show only, but with the greatest sincerity, as parents *mourn for an only son*, and think themselves comfortless because they are childless. Thus do thou lament for the spoiler that suddenly comes upon us. Though he is not come yet, he is coming, the decree is *gone forth*: let us therefore meet the execution of it with a suitable sadness." As saints may rejoice in hope of God's mercies, though they see them only in the promise, so sinners must mourn for fear of God's judgments, though they see them only in the threatenings.

V. He constitutes the prophet a judge over this people that now stand upon their trial: *as ch. i. 10.* *I have set thee over the nations*; so here, *I have set thee for a tower*, or as a sentinel, or a watchman, upon a tower, *among my people*, as an inspector of their actions, *that thou mayest know, and try their way*, *v. 27.* Not that God needed any to inform him concerning them; on the contrary, the prophet knew little of them in comparison, but by the spirit of prophecy: but thus God appeals to the prophet himself, and his own observation concerning their character, that he might be fully satisfied in the equity of God's proceedings against them, and with the more assurance give them warning of the judgments coming. God set him for a tower conspicuous to all, and attacked by many, but made him a *fortress*, a *strong tower*, gave him courage to stem the tide, and bear the shock, of their displeasure. They that will be faithful reprovers, have need to be firm as fortresses.

Now in trying their way he will find two things;

1. That they are wretchedly debauched; (*v. 28.*) *They are all grievous revolters, revolters of revolters*, (so the word is,) the worst of revolters, as a *servant of servants* is the meanest servant. They have a *revolting heart*, have deeply revolted, and revolt more and more. They have seemed to *start fair*, but they revolt and *start back*. They *walk with slanders*; they make nothing of belying and backbiting one another, nay, they make a perfect trade of it, it is their constant course; and they *govern themselves* by the slanders they hear, hating those that they hear ill-spoken of, though ever so unjustly. They are *brass and iron*, base metals, and there is nothing in them that is valuable. They were as *silver and gold*, but they are degenerated. Nay, as they are *all revolters*, so they are *all corrupters*, not only debauched themselves, but industrious to *debauch* others, to corrupt them as they themselves are corrupt; nay, to make them seven times more the children of hell themselves. It is often so; sinners soon become tempters.

2. That they would never be *reclaimed* and *reformed*; it was in vain to think of reducing them, for various methods had been tried with them, and all to no purpose, *v. 29, 30.* He compares them to ore that was supposed to have some good metal in it, and was therefore put into the furnace by the refiner, who used all his art, and took abundance of pains, about it, but it proved all dross, nothing of any value could be extracted out of it. God by his prophets and by his providences had used the most proper means to refine this people, and to purify them from their wickedness; but it was all in vain. By the continual preaching of the word, and a series of afflictions, they had been kept in a constant fire, but all to no purpose. *The bellows* have been still kept so near the fire, to blow it, that they are *burnt*

with the heat of it, or they are quite worn out with long use, and throw into the fire as good for nothing. The prophets have preached their throats sore with *crying aloud* against the sins of Israel, and yet they are not convinced and humbled. The *lead*, which was then used in refining silver, as quicksilver is now, *is consumed of the fire*, and has not done its work; for *the founder melts in vain*, his labour is lost, for *the wicked are not plucked away*, no care is taken to separate between the precious and the vile, to purge out the *old leaven*, to cast out of communion those who, being corrupt themselves, are in danger of infecting others. Or, *Their wickednesses are not removed*, (so some read it,) they are still as bad as ever, and nothing will prevail to part between them and their sins; they will not be brought off from their idolatries and immoralities by all they have *heard*, and all they have *felt*, of the wrath of God against them. And therefore that doom is passed upon them, *v. 30. Reprobate silver shall they be called*, useless and worthless; they glitter as if they had some silver in them, but there is nothing of real virtue or goodness to be found among them; and for this reason the *Lord has rejected them*. He will no more own them as his people, nor look for any good from them; he will *take them away like dross*, (Ps. cxix. 119.) and prepare a *consuming fire* for those that would not be purified by a *refining fire*. By this it appears, (1.) That God has *no pleasure in the death* and ruin of sinners, for he tries all ways and methods with them to prevent their destruction, and qualify them for salvation. Both his ordinances and his providences have a tendency this way, to part between them and their sins; and yet with many it is all lost labour; *We have piped unto you, and you have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and you have not wept*. Therefore, (2.) God will be justified to the death of sinners, and all the blame will lie upon themselves. He did not *reject them* till he had used all proper means to *reduce them*; did not cast them off so long as there was any hope of them, nor abandon them as dross till it appeared that they were *reprobate silver*.

CHAP. VII.

The prophet having in God's name reproved the people for their sins, and given them warning of the judgments of God that were coming upon them, in this chapter prosecutes the same intention for their humiliation and awakening. I. He shows them the invalidity of the plea they so much relied on, that they had the temple of God among them, and constantly attended the service of it, and endeavours to take them off from their confidence in their external privileges and performances, *v. 1. 11. 12.* He reminds them of the desolations of Shiloh; and foretells that such should be the desolations of Jerusalem, *v. 12. 16.* III. He represents to the prophet their abominable idolatries, for which he was thus incensed against them, *v. 17. 20.* IV. He sets before the people that fundamental maxim of religion, that to obey is better than sacrifice, (1 Sam. xv. 22.) and that God would not accept the sacrifices of those that obstinately persisted in disobedience, *v. 21. 28.* V. He threatens to lay the land utterly waste for their idolatry and impiety, and to multiply their slain as they had multiplied their sin, *v. 29. 34.*

I. **T**HE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2. Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD: 3. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. 4. Trust you not in lying words, saying, The

temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, *are these*. 5. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; 6. *If* ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: 7. Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever. 8. Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. 9. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; 10. And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? 11. Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen *it*, saith the LORD. 12. But go ye now unto my place, which *was* in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. 13. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; 14. Therefore will I do unto *this* house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. 15. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, *even* the whole seed of Ephraim.

These verses begin another sermon, which is continued in this and the two following chapters; much to the same effect with those before, to reason them to repentance. Observe,

I. The orders given to the prophet to preach this sermon; for he had not only a general commission, but particular directions and instructions, for every message he delivered. This was a word that *came to him from the Lord*, *v. 1.* We are not told *when* this sermon was to be preached; but are told, 1. *Where* it must be preached—in the gates of the Lord's house, through which they entered into the outer court, or the court of the people. It would affront the priests, and expose the prophet to their rage, to have such a message as this delivered within their precincts; but the prophet must not fear the face of man, he cannot be faithful to his God if he do. 2. *To whom* it must be preached—to the men of Judah, that *enter in at these gates to worship the Lord*; probably, it was at one of the three feasts, when all the males from all parts of the country were to appear before the Lord in the courts of his house, and not to *appear empty*; then he had many together to preach to, and that was the most seasonable time to admonish them not to trust to their privileges. Note, (1.) Even those that profess religion have need to be *preached to*, as well as those that are *without*. (2.) It is desirable to have opportunity of preaching to many together. Wisdom

chooses to cry *in the chief place of concourse*, and as Jeremiah here, *in the opening of the gates*, the temple-gates. (3.) When we are going to worship God, we have need to be admonished *to worship him in the spirit*, and *to have no confidence in the flesh*, Phil. iii. 3.

11. The contents and scope of the sermon itself. It is delivered in the name of *the Lord of hosts*, the God of Israel, who commands the world, but covenants with his people. As creatures we are bound to regard *the Lord of hosts*, as Christians *the God of Israel*; what he said to them he says to us, and it is much the same with that which John Baptist said to those whom he baptized; (Matth. iii. 8, 9.) *Bring forth fruits meet for repentance; and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.* The prophet here tells them,

1. What were the *true words* of God, which they might *trust to*. In short, they might depend upon it, that, if they would repent, and reform their lives, and return to God in a way of duty, he would restore and confirm their peace, would redress their grievances, and return to them in a way of mercy; (v. 3.) *Amend your ways and your doings.* This implies that there had been much *amiss* in their ways and doings, many faults and errors. But it is a great instance of the favour of God to them, that he gives them liberty *to amend*, shows them where and how they must mend, and promises to accept them upon their amendment; *"I will cause you to dwell quietly and peaceably in this place, and a stop shall be put to that which threatens your expulsion."* Reformation is the only way, and a sure way, to prevent ruin.

He explains himself, (v. 5.—7.) and tells them particularly,

(1.) What the *amendment* was which he *expected* from them. They must *thoroughly amend*; in *making good*, they must *make good their ways and doings*; they must *reform with resolution*, and it must be a universal, constant, persevering reformation; not *partial*, but *entire*; not *hypocritical*, but *sincere*; not *wavering*, but *constant*. They must *make the tree good*, and so *make the fruit good*; must amend their hearts and thoughts, and so amend their *ways and doings*. In particular, [1.] They must be *honest* and just in all their dealings. They that had power in their hands must *thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour*, without partiality, and according as the merits of the cause appeared. They must not either in judgment or in contract *oppress the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow*, nor countenance or protect those that did oppress, nor refuse to do them right when they sought for it: they must *not shed innocent blood*, and with it defile *this place* and the land wherein they dwelt. (2.) They must keep close to the worship of the true God only; *Neither walk after other gods*; "Do not hanker after them, nor hearken to those that would draw you into communion with idolaters; for it is, and will be, *to your own hurt*. Be not only so just to your God, but so wise for yourselves, as not to throw away your adorations upon those who are not able to help you, and thereby provoke him who is able to destroy you." Well, this is all that God insists upon.

(2.) He tells them what the *establishment* is which, upon this amendment, they may expect from him; (v. 7.) "Set about such a work of reformation as this with all speed, go through with it, and abide by it; and *I will cause you to dwell in this place*, this temple; it shall continue your place of resort and refuge, the place of your comfortable meeting with God and one another; and you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers for ever and ever, and shall never be turned out either from God's house or from your own. It is promised that they shall still enjoy their civil and sacred privileges, that

they shall have a *comfortable enjoyment* of them; *I will cause you to dwell here*; (and those *dwell at ease*, whom God gives a settlement to;) they shall enjoy it by *covenant*, by virtue of the grant made of it to their fathers, not by providence, but by promise. They shall *continue* in the enjoyment of it without eviction or molestation, they shall not be disturbed, much less dispossessed, *for ever and ever*; nothing but sin could throw them out. An everlasting inheritance in the heavenly Canaan is hereby secured to all that live in godliness and honesty. And the vulgar Latin reads a further privilege here, v. 3, 7. *Habitabo vobiscum—I will dwell with you in this place*; and we should find Canaan itself but an uncomfortable place to dwell in, if God did not dwell with us there.

2. What were the *lying words* of their own hearts, which they must *not trust to*. He cautions them against this self-deceit; (v. 4.) "*Trust not in lying words*; you are told in what way, and upon what terms, you may be easy, safe, and happy; now do not flatter yourselves with an opinion that you may be so on any other terms, or in any other way." Yet he charges them with this self-deceit arising from vanity; (v. 8.) "*Behold, it is plain that you do trust in lying words*, notwithstanding what is said to you; you trust in words that cannot profit; you rely upon a plea that will stand you in no stead." They that slight the words of truth, which would profit them, take shelter in words of falsehood, which cannot profit them. Now these lying words were, "*The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these.*" These buildings, the courts, the holy place, and the holy of holies, are *the temple of the Lord*, built by his appointment, to his glory; here he resides, here he is worshipped, here we meet three times a year to pay our homage to him as our King in his palace." This they thought was security enough to them to keep God and his favours from leaving them, God and his judgments from breaking in upon them. When the prophets told them how *sinful* they were, and how *miserable* they were likely to be still, they appealed to the temple; "How can we be either so or so, as long as we have that *holy, happy place* among us?" The prophet repeats it because they repeated it upon all occasions. It was the cant of the times, it was in their mouths upon all occasions. If they heard an awakening sermon, if any startling piece of news was brought upon them, they lulled themselves asleep again with this, "We cannot but do well, for we have *the temple of the Lord among us.*" Note, The privileges of a *form of godliness*, are often the pride and confidence of those that are strangers and enemies to the *power* of it. It is common for those that are *furthest from God*, to boast themselves most of their being *near to the church*. They are *haughty because of the holy mountain*; (Zeph. iii. 11.) as if God's mercy were so tied to them, that they might defy his justice.

Now, to convince them what a frivolous plea this was, and what little stead it would stand them in,

(1.) He shows them the gross absurdity of it in itself. If they knew any thing either of the *temple of the Lord*, or of the *Lord of the temple*, they must think that to plead that, either in excuse of their sin against God, or in arrest of God's judgment against them, was the most ridiculous, unreasonable thing that could be.

[1.] God is a *holy* God; but this plea made him the Patron of sin, of the worst of sins, which even the light of nature condemns; (v. 9, 10.) "What," says he, "*will you steal, murder, and commit adultery*, be guilty of the vilest immoralities, and which the common interest, as well as the common sense, of mankind witness against? *Will you swear falsely*, a crime which all nations (who with the belief of a

God have had a veneration for an oath) have always had a horror of? Will *you burn incense to Baal*, a dunghill-deity, that sets up as a rival with the great Jehovah, and, not content with that, *will you walk after other gods too, whom you know not*, and by all these crimes put a daring affront upon God, both as *the Lord of hosts, and the God of Israel?* Will you exchange a God whose power and goodness you have had such a long experience of, for gods whose ability and willingness to help you you know nothing of? And when you have thus done the worst you can against God, will you brazen your faces so far as to come and *stand before him in this house which is called by his name*, and in which his name is called upon—stand before him as servants waiting his commands, as supplicants expecting his favour? Will you act in open rebellion against him, and yet herd yourselves among his subjects, among the best of them? By this, it should seem, you think that either he does not *discover*, or does not *dislike*, your wicked practices, to imagine either of which is to put the highest indignity possible upon him. It is as if you should say, *We are delivered to do all these abominations.*" If they had not the front to say this *totidem verbis*—in so many words, yet their actions speak it aloud. They could not but own that God, even their own God, had many a time *delivered* them, and been a present Help to them, when otherwise they must have perished. He, in delivering them, designed to reduce them to himself, and by his goodness to lead them to repentance; but they resolved to persist in their *abominations* notwithstanding; as soon as they were delivered, (as of old in the days of the Judges,) they *did evil again in the sight of the Lord*; which was, in effect, to say, in direct contradiction to the true intent and meaning of the providences which had affected them, that God had delivered them in order to put them again into a capacity of rebelling against him by sacrificing the more profusely to their idols. Note, Those who continue in sin because grace has abounded, or that grace may abound, do, in effect, make Christ the Minister of sin. Some take it thus; "You present yourselves before God with your sacrifices and sin-offerings, and then say, *We are delivered*, we are discharged from our guilt, now it shall do us no hurt; when all this is but to blind the world, and stop the mouth of conscience, that you may, the more easily to yourselves, and the more plausibly before others, *do all these abominations.*"

[2.] His temple was a *holy place*; but this plea made it a *protection* to the most unholiest persons; "Is this house, which is called by my name, and is a standing sign of God's kingdom, set up among men in opposition to the kingdom of sin and Satan—is this become a den of robbers in your eyes?" Do you think it was built to be not only a rendezvous of, but a refuge and shelter to, the vilest of malefactors?" No; though the horns of the altar were a sanctuary to him that slew a man unawares, yet they were not so to a wilful murderer, nor to one that did aught presumptuously, Exod. xxi. 14.—1 Kings ii. 29. Those that think to excuse themselves in unchristian practices with the Christian name, and sin the more boldly and securely because there is a Sin-offering provided, do, in effect, make God's house of prayer a den of thieves; as the priests in Christ's time, Matth. xxi. 13. But could they thus impose upon God? No, *Behold, I have seen it, saith the Lord*, have seen the real iniquity through the counterfeit and dissembled piety. Note, Though men may deceive one another with the shows of devotion, yet they cannot deceive God.

(2.) He shows them the insufficiency of this plea adjudged long since in the case of Shiloh.

[1.] It is certain that Shiloh was ruined, though

it had God's sanctuary in it, when by its wickedness it profaned that sanctuary; (v. 12.) *Go ye now to my place which was in Shiloh*; it is probable that the ruins of that once flourishing city were yet remaining; they might, at least, read the history of it, which ought to affect them as if they saw the place: there God *set his name at the first*, there the tabernacle was set up when Israel first took possession of Canaan, (Josh. xviii. 1.) and thither the tribes went up; but those that attended the service of the tabernacle there, corrupted both themselves and others, and from them arose the *wickedness of his people Israel*; that fountain was poisoned, and sent forth malignant streams; and what came of it? Go, *see what God did to it!* Was it protected by its having the tabernacle in it? No, God *forsook* it, (Ps. lxxviii. 60.) sent his ark into captivity, cut off the house of Eli that presided there; and it is very probable that the city was quite destroyed, for we never read any more of it but as a monument of divine vengeance upon *holy places* when they harbour *wicked people*. Note, God's judgments upon others, who have really revolted from God, while they have kept up a profession of nearness to him, should be a warning to us not to *trust in lying words*. It is good to consult precedents, and make use of them; *remember Lot's wife*; remember Shiloh and the seven churches of Asia; and know that the *ark and candlestick* are moveable things, Rev. ii. 5. Matth. xxi. 43.

[2.] It is as certain that Shiloh's fate will be Jerusalem's doom, if a speedy and sincere repentance prevent it not. *First*, Jerusalem was now as *sinful* as ever Shiloh was; that is proved by the unerring testimony of God himself against them; (v. 13.) "*You have done all these works*, you cannot deny it;" and they continued *obstinate* in their sin; that is proved by the testimony of God's messengers, by whom he *spoke unto them* to return and repent, *rising up early and speaking*, as one in care, as one in earnest, as one who would lose no time in dealing with them; nay, who should take the fittest opportunity for speaking to them *early in the morning*, when, if ever, they were sober, and had their thoughts free and clear; but it was all in vain, God spake, but they *heard not*, they heeded not, they never minded; he *called them*, but they *answered not*; they would not come at his call. Note, What God has *spoken to us* greatly aggravates what we have done against him.

Secondly, Jerusalem shall shortly be as miserable as ever Shiloh was; *Therefore will I do unto this house as I did to Shiloh*, ruin it, and lay it waste: v. 14. Those that tread in the steps of the wickedness of those that went before them, must expect to fall by the like judgments, for all these things *happen to them for ensamples*. The temple at Jerusalem, though ever so strong built, if wickedness was found in it, would be as unable to keep its ground, and as easily conquered, as even the *tabernacle* in Shiloh was, when God's day of vengeance was come; "This house" (says God) "*is called by my name*, and therefore you may think that I should protect it; it is the house in which you trust, and you think that it will protect you; this land is the place, this city the place, which I gave to you and your fathers, and therefore you are secure of the continuance of it, and think that nothing can turn you out of it; but the men of Shiloh thus flattered themselves, and did but deceive themselves." He quotes another precedent, (v. 15.) the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes, who were the seed of Abraham, and had the covenant of circumcision, and possessed the land which God gave to them and their fathers, and yet their idolatry threw them out, and extirpated them? "And can you think but that the same evil courses should be as

fatal to you?" Doubtless they will be so, for God is uniform, and of a piece with himself in his judicial proceedings. It is a rule of justice, *ut parium par sit ratio*—that in a parity of cases the same judgment should proceed; "You have corrupted yourselves as your brethren the seed of Ephraim did, and are become their brethren in iniquity, and therefore I will cast you out of my sight as I have cast them." The interpretation here given of the judgment, makes it a terrible one indeed; the casting of them out of their land signified God's casting them out of his sight as if he would never look upon them, never look after them more. Wherever we are cast, it is well enough, if we be kept in the love of God; but if we are thrown out of his favour, our case is miserable though we dwell in our own land. This threatening, that God would make this house like Shiloh, we shall meet with again, and find Jeremiah indicted for it, *ch. xxvi. 6.*

16. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee. 17. Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem? 18. The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. 19. Do they provoke me to anger? saith the LORD: do they not provoke themselves, to the confusion of their own faces? 20. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched.

God had showed them, in the foregoing verses, that the temple, and the service of it, of which they boasted, and in which they trusted, should not avail to prevent the judgment threatened. But there was another thing which might stand them in some stead, and which yet they had no value for, and that was, the prophet's intercession for them; his prayers would do them more good than their own pleas: now here that support is taken from them; and their case is sad indeed, who have lost their interest in the prayers of God's ministers and people.

1. God here forbids the prophet to pray for them; (*v. 16.*) "The decree is gone forth, their ruin is resolved on, therefore pray not thou for this people, pray not for the preventing of this judgment threatened; they have sinned unto death, and therefore pray not for their life, but for the life of their souls," 1 John v. 16. See here, 1. That God's prophets are praying men; Jeremiah foretold the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, and yet prayed for their preservation, not knowing that the decree was absolute; and it is the will of God that we pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Even when we threaten sinners with damnation, we must pray for their salvation, that they may turn, and live. Jeremiah was hated, and persecuted, and reproached, by the children of his people, and yet he prayed for them, for it becomes us to render good for evil. 2. That God's praying prophets have a great interest in heaven, how little soever they have on earth. When God was determined to destroy this people, he be-

speaks the prophet not to pray for them, because he would not have his prayers to lie (as prophets' prayers seldom did) unanswered. God said to Moses, *Let me alone*, Exod. xxxii. 10. 3. It is an ill omen to a people, when God restrains the spirits of his ministers and people from praying for them, and gives them to see their case so desperate, that they have no heart to speak a good word for them. 4. Those that will not regard good ministers' preaching, cannot expect any benefit by their praying. If you will not hear us when we speak from God to you, God will not hear us when we speak to him for you.

11. He gives him a reason for this prohibition. Praying breath is too precious a thing to be lost and thrown away upon a people hardened in sin, and marked for ruin.

1. They are resolved to persist in their rebellion against God, and will not be turned back by the prophet's preaching; for this he appeals to the prophet himself, and his own inspection and observation; (*v. 17.*) *Seest thou not what they do openly, and publicly, without either shame or fear, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem?* This intimates both that the sin was evident, and could not be denied, and that the sinners were impudent, and would not be reclaimed: they committed their wickedness even in the prophet's presence and under his eye; he saw what they did, and yet they did it, which was an affront to his office, and to him whose officer he was, and bade defiance to both.

Now observe, (1.) What the sin is, with which they are here charged—it is idolatry, *v. 18.* Their idolatrous respects are paid to the queen of heaven, the moon, either in an image, or in the original, or both: they worshipped it, probably, under the name of *Ashtaroth*, or some other of their goddesses, being in love with the brightness in which they saw the moon walk, and thinking themselves indebted to her for her benign influences, or fearing her malignant ones, Job xxxi. 26. The worshipping of the moon was much in use among the heathen nations, Jer. xlv. 17, 19. Some read it the frame or workmanship of heaven; the whole celestial globe with all its ornaments and powers was the object of their adoration. They worshipped the host of heaven, Acts vii. 42. The homage they should have paid to their Prince, they paid to the statues that beautified the frontispiece of his palace; they worshipped the creatures instead of him that made them, the servants instead of him that commands them, and the gifts instead of him that gave them. With the queen of heaven they worshipped other gods, images of things not only in heaven above, but in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth; for those that forsake the true God, wander endlessly after false ones. To these deities of their own making they offer cakes for meat-offerings, and pour out drink-offerings, as if they had their meat and drink from them, and were obliged to make to them their acknowledgments; and see how busy they are, and how every hand is employed in the service of these idols, according as they used to be employed in their domestic services. The children were sent to gather wood, the fathers kindled the fire to heat the oven, being of the poorer sort, that could not afford to keep servants to do it, yet they would rather do it themselves than it should be undone; the women kneaded the dough with their own hands, for perhaps though they had servants to do it, they took a pride in showing their zeal for their idols by doing it themselves. Let us be instructed even by this bad example, in the service of our God. [1.] Let us honour him with our substance, as these that have our subsistence from him, and eat and drink to the glory of him from whom we have our meat

and drink. [2.] Let us not decline the *hardest* services, nor disdain to stoop to the *meanest*, by which God may be honoured; for *none shall kindle a fire on God's altar for naught*. Let us think it an honour to be employed in any work for God. [3.] Let us bring up our children in the acts of devotion; let them, as they are capable, be employed in doing something toward the keeping up of religious exercises.

2. What is the direct tendency of this sin; "It is *that they may provoke me to anger*, they cannot design any thing else in it. But, (v. 19.) *do they provoke me to anger?* Is it because I am hard to be pleased, or easily provoked? Or am I to bear the blame of the resentment? No, it is their own doing, they may thank themselves, and they alone shall bear it." *Is it against God, that they provoke him to wrath?* Is he the worse for it? Does it do him any real damage? No, *is it not against themselves, to the confusion of their own faces?* It is malice against God, but it is *impotent* malice, it cannot hurt him; nay, it is *foolish* malice, it will hurt *themselves*; they *show* their spite against God, but they *do* the spite to themselves. Canst thou think any other than that a people, thus desperately set upon their own ruin, should be abandoned?

2. God is resolved to proceed in his judgments against them, and will not be *turned back* by the prophet's prayers; (v. 20.) *Thus saith the Lord God*, and what he saith he will not *unsay*, nor can all the world *gainsay*; hear it therefore, and tremble; "*Behold, my anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place* as the flood of waters was upon the old world, or the shower of fire and brimstone upon Sodom; since they will anger me, let them see what will come of it." They shall soon find, (1.) That there is no *escaping* this deluge of fire, either by flying from it, or fencing against it; it shall be poured out on *this place*, though it be a holy place, the Lord's house. It shall reach both *man and beast*, like the plagues of Egypt, and, like some of them, shall destroy the *trees of the field*, and the *fruit of the ground*, which they had designed and *prepared for Baal*; and of which they had made *cakes to the queen of heaven*. (2.) There is no *extinguishing* it; it shall burn, and shall not be *quenched*; prayers and tears shall then avail nothing; when *his wrath is kindled but a little*, much more when it is kindled to such a degree, there shall be no quenching of it. God's *wrath* is that fire unquenchable, which eternity itself will not see the period of; *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*.

21. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. 22. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices: 23. But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. 24. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. 25. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early,

and sending them: 26. Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers. 27. Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee. 28. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.

God, having showed the people that *the temple* would not *protect* them while they polluted it with their wickedness, here shows them that their *sacrifices* would not *atone* for them, nor be accepted, while they went on in disobedience. See with what contempt he here speaks of their ceremonial service; (v. 21.) "*Put your burnt-offerings to your sacrifices*, go on in them as long as you please; add one sort of sacrifice to another; turn your *burnt-offerings*, which were to be wholly burnt to the honour of God, into *peace-offerings*," (which the offerer himself had a considerable share of,) "that you may *eat flesh*, for that is all the good you are likely to have from your sacrifices, a good meal's meat or two; but expect not any other benefit by them while you live at this loose rate. *Keep your sacrifices to yourselves*," (so some understand it,) "let them be served up at your own table, for they are no way acceptable at God's altars." For the opening of this,

I. He shows them that *obedience* was the only thing he required of them, v. 22, 23. He appeals to the original contract, by which they were first formed into a people, when they were brought out of Egypt. God made them a *kingdom of priests* to himself, not that he might be regaled with their sacrifices, as the devils, whom the heathen worshipped, which are represented as eating with pleasure the fat of their sacrifices, and drinking the wine of their drink-offerings, Deut. xxxii. 38. No, *Will God eat the flesh of bulls?* Ps. l. 13. *I spake not to your fathers concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices*, not of them at first. The precepts of the moral law were given before the ceremonial institutions; and those came afterward, as trials of their obedience, and assistances to their repentance and faith. The Levitical law begins thus, *If any man of you will bring an offering*, he must do so and so, (Lev. i. 2.—ii. 1.) as if it were intended rather to *regulate* sacrifice than to *require* it: but that which God commanded, which he bound them to by his supreme authority, and which he insisted upon as the condition of the covenant was, *Obey my voice*; see Exod. xv. 26. where this was the *statute* and the *ordinance* by which God proved them, *Hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord thy God*. The condition of their being God's peculiar people was this, (Exod. xix. 5.) *If ye will obey my voice indeed*. "Make conscience of the duties of natural religion, observe positive institutions from a principle of obedience; and then, *I will be your God, and ye shall be my people*," the greatest honour, happiness, and satisfaction, that any of the children of men are capable of. "Let your conversation be regular, and in every thing study to comply with the will and word of God; *walk* within the bounds that I have set you, and in *all the ways that I have commanded you*, and then you may assure yourselves that *it shall be well with you*." The demand here is very reasonable, that we should be directed by Infinite Wisdom to that which is fit; that he that made us should command us, and that he should give us law,

who gives us our being, and all the supports of it. And the promise is very encouraging; Let God's will be your rule, and his favour shall be your felicity.

11. He shows them that *disobedience* was the only thing for which he had a quarrel with them. *He would not reprove them for their sacrifices*, for the omission of them, they had been *continually before him*, (Ps. l. 8.) with them they hoped to bribe God, and purchase a license to go on in sin. That therefore which God had all along laid to their charge, was, breaking his commandments in the course of their conversation; while they observed them, in some instances, in the course of their devotion, v. 24, 25, &c.

1. They set up their own will in competition with the will of God. *They hearkened not* to God and to his law, they never heeded that, it was to them as if it had never been given, or were of no force; they *inclined not their ear* to attend to it, much less their hearts to comply with it. But they would have their own way, would do as they chose, and not as they were bidden. *Their own counsels* were their guide, and not the dictates of divine wisdom; that shall be lawful and good with them, which they think so, though the word of God says quite contrary. *The imaginations of their evil heart*, the appetites and passions of it, shall be a law to them, and they will walk *in the way* of it, and in the *sight of their eyes*.

2. If they began well, yet they did not proceed, but soon flew off. *They went backward*, when they talked of making a captain, and returning to Egypt again, and would not *go forward* under God's conduct. They promised fair, *All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do*; and if they would but have kept in that good mind, all had been well; but, instead of going on in the way of duty, they drew back into the way of sin, and were worse than ever.

3. When God sent to them by *word of mouth* to put them in mind of *the written word*, which was the business of the prophets, it was all one, still they were *disobedient*. God had *servants* of his among them in every age, *since they came out of Egypt*, unto this day, some or other to tell them of their faults, and put them in mind of their duty, whom he *rose up early* to send, (as before, v. 13.) as men rise up early to call servants to their work; but they were as deaf to the prophets as they were to the law; (v. 26.) *Yet they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear*. This had been their way and manner all along; they were of the same stubborn, refractory disposition with those that went before them; it had all along been the *genius* of the nation, and an *evil genius* it was, that continually haunted them till it ruined them at last.

4. Their practice and character were still the same; they are worse, and not better, *than their fathers*.

(1.) Jeremiah can himself witness against them, that they were disobedient, or he shall soon find it so; (v. 27.) "*Thou shalt speak all these words to them, shalt particularly charge them with disobedience and obstinacy; but even that will not work upon them, they will not hearken to thee, nor heed thee; thou shalt go, and call to them with all the plainness and earnestness imaginable, but they will not answer thee, they will either give thee no answer at all, or not an obedient answer; they will not come at thy call.*"

(2.) He must therefore own that they deserved the character of a *disobedient people* that were ripe for destruction, and must go to them, and tell them so to their faces; (v. 28.) "*Say unto them, This is a nation that obeys not the voice of the Lord their God; they are notorious for their obstinacy; they sacrifice to the Lord as their God, but they will not*

be ruled by him as *their God*; they will *not receive* either the *instruction* of his word or the correction of his rod, they will not be reclaimed or reformed by either; *truth is perished* among them, they cannot receive it, they will not submit to it, nor be governed by it; they will not *speak* truth, there is no believing a word they say, for it is *cut off from their mouth*, and lying comes in the room of it; they are false both to God and man.

29. Cut off thy hair, *O Jerusalem*, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath. 30. For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it. 31. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart. 32. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor, The valley of the son of Hinnom, but, The valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet till there be no place. 33. And the carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away. 34. Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride; for the land shall be desolate.

Here is,

I. A loud call to weeping and mourning. Jerusalem, that had been a joyous city, the joy of the whole earth, must now *take up a lamentation on high places*, (v. 29.) the *high places* where they had served their idols; there must they now bemoan their misery. In token both of sorrow and slavery, Jerusalem must now *cut off her hair*, and *cast it away*; the word is peculiar to the *hair* of the Nazarites, which was the badge and token of their dedication to God, and it is called *their crown*. Jerusalem had been a city which was a Nazarite to God, but must now *cut off her hair*, must be profaned, degraded, and separated from God, as she had been separated to him. It is time for those that have lost their holiness, to lay aside their joy.

II. Just cause given for this great lamentation.

1. The sin of Jerusalem appears here very heinous, nowhere worse, or more exceedingly sinful. "*The children of Judah*" (God's professing people, that came forth out of the waters of Judah, Isa. xlviii. 1.) "*have done evil in my sight*, under my eye, in my presence; they have affronted me to my face, which very much aggravates the affront;" or, "*They have done that which they know to be evil in my sight*, and in the highest degree offensive to me." Idolatry was the sin which was, above all other sins, *evil in God's sight*. Now here are two things charged upon them in their idolatry, which were very provoking.

(1.) That they were very *impudent* in it toward God, and set him at defiance; (v. 30.) *They have*

set their abominations, their abominable idols, and the altars erected to them, *in the house that is called by my name*, in the very courts of the temple, to pollute it. Manasseh did so, (2 Kings xxi. 7. xxiii. 12.) as if they thought God would connive at it, or cared not though he was never so much displeased with it; or as if they would reconcile heaven and hell, God and Baal. The heart is the place which God has chosen to put his name there; if sin have the innermost and uppermost place there, we pollute the temple of the Lord, and therefore he re-sents nothing more than setting up idols in their heart, Ezek. xiv. 4.

(2.) That they were very *barbarous* in it toward their own children, v. 31. They have particularly built the high places of Tophet, where the image of Moloch was set up, in the valley of the son of Hinnom, adjoining to Jerusalem; and there they burned their sons and their daughters in the fire, burned them alive, killed them, and killed them in the most cruel manner imaginable, to honour or appease those idols that were devils, and not gods. This was surely the greatest instance that ever was of the power of Satan in the children of disobedience, and of the degeneracy and corruption of the human nature: one would willingly hope that there were not many instances of such a barbarous idolatry, but it is amazing that there should be any, that men could be so perfectly void of natural affection, as to do a thing so inhuman, as to burn little innocent children, and their own too; that they should be so perfectly void of natural religion, as to think it lawful to do this; nay, to think it acceptable; surely it was in a way of righteous judgment, because they had changed the glory of God into the similitude of a beast, that God gave them up to such vile affections as changed them into worse than beasts. God says of this, that it was *what he commanded them not, neither came it into his heart*; which is not meant of his not commanding them thus to worship Moloch, (this he had expressly forbidden them,) but, he had never commanded that his worshippers should be at such an expense, nor put such a force upon their natural affection, in honouring him; it never came into his heart to have children offered to him, yet they had forsaken his service for the service of such gods as, by commanding this, showed themselves to be indeed enemies to mankind.

2. The destruction of Jerusalem appears here very terrible: that speaks misery enough in general; (v. 29.) *The Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath*. Sin makes those the generation of God's wrath, that had been the generation of his love. And God will reject and quite forsake them, who have thus by their impenitence made themselves vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. He will *disown* them for his; Verily, I say unto you, I knew you not; and he will give them up to the terrors of their own guilt, and leave them in those hands.

(1.) Death shall triumph over them, v. 32, 33. Sin reigns unto death, for that is the wages of it, the end of those things. Tophet, the valley adjoining to Jerusalem, shall be called the valley of slaughter, for there multitudes shall be slain, when, in their sallies out of the city, and their attempts to escape, they fall into the hands of the besiegers. Or, it shall be called the valley of slaughtered ones, because thither the corpses of those that are slain shall be brought, to be buried, all other burying-places being full; and there they shall bury until there be no more place to make a grave. This intimates the multitude of those that shall die by the sword, pestilence, and famine; death shall ride on prosperously with dreadful pomp and power, conquering and to conquer. The slain of the Lord shall be many.

This valley of Tophet was a place where the citizens of Jerusalem walked to take the air; but it shall now be spoiled for that use, for it shall be so full of graves, that there shall be no walking there, because of the danger of contracting a ceremonial pollution by the touch of a grave. There it was that they sacrificed some of their children, and dedicated others to Moloch, and there they shall fall as victims to divine justice. Tophet had formerly been the burying-place, or burning-place, of the dead bodies of the besiegers, when the Assyrian army was routed by an angel; and for this it was ordained of old, Isa. xxx. 33. But they having forgotten this mercy, and made it the place of their sin, God will now turn it into a burying-place for the besieged. In allusion to this valley, hell is in the New Testament called *Gehenna—the valley of Hinnom*, for there were buried both the invading Assyrians, and the revolting Jews; so hell is a receptacle after death both for infidels and hypocrites, the open enemies of God's church, and its treacherous friends; it is the congregation of the dead; it is prepared for the generation of God's wrath. But so great shall that slaughter be, that even the spacious valley of Tophet shall not be able to contain the slain; and at length there shall not be enough left alive to bury the dead, so that the carcasses of the people shall be meat for the birds and beasts of prey, that shall feed upon them like carrion, and none shall have the concern or courage to frighten them away, as Rizzah did from the dead bodies of Saul's sons, 2 Sam. xxi. 10. This was according to the threatening of the law, and a branch of the curse; (Deut. xxviii. 26.) *Thy carcase shall be meat to the fowls and beasts, and no man shall fray them away*. Thus do the law and the prophets agree, and the execution with both. The decent burying of the dead is a piece of humanity, in remembrance of what the dead body has been—the tabernacle of a reasonable soul. Nay, it is a piece of divinity, in expectation of what the dead body shall be at the resurrection: the want of it has sometimes been an instance of the rage of men against God's witnesses, Rev. xi. 9. Here it is threatened as an instance of the wrath of God against his enemies, and is an intimation that evil pursues sinners even after death.

(2.) Joy shall depart from them; (v. 34.) *Then will I cause to cease the voice of mirth*. God had called by his prophets, and by lesser judgments, to weeping and mourning; but they walked contrary to him, and would hear of nothing but joy and gladness, Isa. xxii. 12, 13. And what came of it? Now God called to lamentation, (v. 29.) and he made his call effectual, leaving them neither cause nor heart for joy and gladness. They that will not weep, shall weep; they that will not by the grace of God be cured of their vain mirth, shall by the justice of God be deprived of all mirth; for when God judges he will overcome. It is threatened here, that there shall be nothing to rejoice in; there shall be none of the joy of weddings; no mirth, for there shall be no marriages; the comforts of life shall be abandoned, and all care to keep up mankind upon earth cast off; there shall be none of the voice of the bridegroom and the bride; no music, no nuptial songs; nor shall there be any more of the joy of harvest, for the land shall be desolate, uncultivated and unimproved: both the cities of Judah, and the streets of Jerusalem, shall lock thus melancholy; and when they thus look about them, and see no cause to rejoice, no marvel if they retire into themselves, and find no heart to rejoice. Note, God can soon mar the mirth of the most jovial, and make it to cease, which is a reason why we should always rejoice with trembling; be merry and wise.

CHAP. VIII.

The prophet proceeds, in this chapter, both to magnify and to justify the destruction that God was bringing upon his people; to show how grievous it would be, and yet how righteous. I. He represents the judgments coming as so very terrible, that death should appear so as most to be dreaded, and yet should be desired, v. 1. .3. II. He aggravates the wretched stupidity and wilfulness of this people, as that which brought this ruin upon them, v. 4. .12. III. He describes the great confusion and consternation that the whole land should be in, upon the alarm of it, v. 13. .17. IV. The prophet is himself deeply affected with it, and lays it very much to heart, v. 18. .22.

1. **A**T that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves: 2. And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth. 3. And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the LORD of hosts.

These verses might fitly have been joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, as giving a further description of the dreadful desolation which the army of the Chaldeans should make in the land. It shall strangely alter the property of death itself, and for the worse too.

1. Death shall not now be, as it always used to be—the *repose of the dead*. When Job makes his court to the grave, it is in hope of this, that *there he shall rest with kings and counsellors of the earth*; but now the ashes of the dead, even of *kings and princes*, shall be disturbed, and their *bones scattered at the grave's mouth*, Ps. cxli. 7. It was threatened in the close of the former chapter, that the slain should be *unburied*; that might be through neglect, and was not so strange; but here we find the graves of those that were buried, industriously and maliciously *opened* by the victorious enemy; who, either for *covetousness*, hoping to find treasure in the graves, or for *spite* to the nation, and in a *rage* against it, *brought out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the princes*. The dignity of their sepulchres could not *secure* them, nay, did the more *expose* them to be *rifled*; but it was base and barbarous thus to trample upon royal dust. We will hope that the bones of good Josiah were not disturbed, because he piously protected the bones of the man of God, when he burned the bones of the idolatrous priests, 2 Kings xxiii. 18. The bones of the *priests and prophets* too were digged up and thrown about. Some think the false *prophets*, and the idol *priests*, God putting this mark of ignominy upon them: but if they were God's prophets and his priests, it is what the Psalmist complains of, as the fruit of the outrage of the enemies, Ps. lxxix: 1, 2. Nay, those of the spiteful Chaldeans that could not reach to violate the sepulchres of princes and priests, would rather play at small game than

sit out, and therefore pulled the bones of the ordinary inhabitants of Jerusalem out of their graves. The barbarous nations were sometimes guilty of these absurd and inhuman triumphs over these they had conquered, and God permitted it here, for a mark of his displeasure against the *generation of his wrath*, and for terror to those that survived. The bones being digged out of the graves, were *spread abroad* upon the face of the earth in contempt, and to make the reproach the more *spreading and lasting*. They spread them to be *dried*, that they might carry them about in triumph, or might make fuel of them, or make some superstitious use of them. They shall be spread *before the sun*; for they shall not be ashamed openly to avow the fact at noon-day: and before *the moon and stars*, even all the *host of heaven*, whom they have made idols of, v. 2. From the mention of the *sun, moon, and stars*, which should be the unconcerned spectators of this tragedy, the prophet takes occasion to show how they had idolized them, and paid those respects to them, which they should have paid to God only; that it might be observed how little they got by worshipping the creature, for the creatures they worshipped when they were in distress, saw it, but regarded it not, nor gave them any relief, but were rather pleased to see those *abused* in being *vilified*, by whom they had been *abused* in being *deified*. See how their respects to their idols are enumerated, to show how we ought to behave toward our God. (1.) *They loved them*; as amiable beings and bountiful benefactors they esteemed them and delighted in them, and therefore did all that follows. (2.) *They served them*, did all they could in honour of them, and thought nothing too much; they conformed to all the laws of their superstition, without disputing. (3.) *They walked after them*, strove to imitate and resemble them, according to the characters and accounts of them they had received, which gave rise and countenance to much of the abominable wickedness of the heathen. (4.) *They sought them*, consulted them as oracles, appealed to them as judges, implored their favour, and prayed to them as their benefactors. (5.) *They worshipped them*, gave them divine honour, as having a sovereign dominion over them. Before these lights of heaven, whom they had courted, shall their dead bodies be cast, and left to putrefy, and to be *as dung upon the face of the earth*; and the sun's shining upon them will but make them the more noisome and offensive. Whatever we make a god of but the true God only, it will stand us in no stead on the other side death and the grave, not for the body, much less for the soul.

2. Death shall now be what it never used to be—the *choice of the living*: not because there appears in it any thing delightful; on the contrary, death never appeared in more horrid, frightful shapes than now, when they cannot promise themselves either a comfortable death or a human burial; and yet every thing in this world shall become so irksome, and all the prospects so black and dismal, that *death shall be chosen rather than life*; (v. 3.) not in a believing hope of happiness in the other life, but in an utter despair of any ease in this life. The nation is now reduced to a *family*, so small is the residue of those that remain in it; and it is an *evil family*, still as bad as ever, their hearts *unhumbled*, and their lusts *unmortified*: these remain alive (and that is all) in the many places whither they were driven by the judgments of God; some prisoners in the country of their enemies, others beggars in their neighbours' country, and others fugitives and vagabonds there and in their own country. And though those that died, died very miserably, yet those that survived, and were thus driven out, should live yet more miserably; so that

they should *choose death* rather than life, and wish a thousand times that they had fallen with them to a fall by the sword. Let this cure us of the inordinate love of life, that the case may be such, that it may become a burthen and terror, and we may be strongly tempted to *choose strangling* and death rather.

4. Moreover, thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return? 5. Why *then* is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. 6. I hearkened and heard, *but* they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. 7. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming: but my people know not the judgment of the LORD. 8. How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD *is* with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he *it*; the pen of the scribes *is* in vain. 9. The wise *men* are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom *is* in them? 10. Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit *them*: for every one, from the least even unto the greatest, is given to covetousness; from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely. 11. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace. 12. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

The prophet here is instructed to set before this people the folly of their impertinence, which was it that brought this ruin upon them. They are here represented as the most stupid, senseless people in the world, that would not be made wise by all the methods that Infinite Wisdom took to bring them to themselves and their right mind, and so to prevent the ruin that was coming upon them.

I. They would not attend to the dictates of reason; they would not act in the affairs of their souls with the same common prudence with which they acted in other things. Sinners would become *saints*, if they would show themselves *men*; and religion would soon rule them, if right reason might. Observe it here; Come, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; (v. 4, 5.) *Shall men fall, and not arise?* If men happen to fall to the ground, to fall into the dirt, will they not get up again as fast as they can? They are not such fools as to lie still when they are down. Shall a man turn aside out of the right way? Yes, the most careful traveller may miss his way; but then, as soon as he is aware

of it, will he not return? Yes, certainly he will, with all speed, and will thank him that showed him his mistake. Thus men do in other things; *why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?* Why do not they, when they are fallen into sin, hasten to get up again by repentance? Why do not they, when they see they have missed their way, correct their error, and reform? No man in his wits will go on in a way that he knows will never bring him to his journey's end; *why then is his people slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?* See the nature of sin—it is a *backsliding*, it is going *back* from the right way; not only into a *by-path*, but into a *contrary path*; back from the way that leads to life to that which leads to utter destruction. And this *backsliding*, if almighty grace do not interpose to prevent it, will be a *perpetual* backsliding; the sinner not only wanders *endlessly*, but proceeds *endwise* toward ruin. The same subtilty of the tempter that brings men to sin, holds them fast in it, and they contribute to their own captivity, *they hold fast deceit*. Sin is a great cheat, and they *hold it fast*; they love it dearly, and resolve to stick to it, and baffle all the methods God takes to part between them and their sins. The excuses they make for their sins are deceptions, and so are all their hopes of impunity; yet they hold fast these, and will not be undeceived, and therefore they *refuse to return*. Note, There is some *deceit* or other which those *hold fast* that go on wilfully in sinful ways; some *lie in their right hand*, by which they *keep hold* of their sins.

II. They would not attend to the dictates of conscience, which is our reason reflecting upon ourselves and our own actions, v. 6. Observe, 1. What expectations there were from them, that they would bethink themselves; *I hearkened and heard*. The prophet listened to see what effect his preaching had upon them; God himself listened, as one that desires not the death of sinners, that would have been glad to hear any thing that promised repentance, that would certainly have heard it, if there had been any thing said of that tendency, and would soon have answered it with comfort, as he did David when he said, *I will confess*, Ps. xxxii. 5. God looks upon men, when they have done amiss, (Job xxxiii. 27.) to see what they will do next; he *hearkens and hears*. 2. How these expectations were disappointed; *They spake not aright*, as I thought they would have done. They did not only not do right, but not so much as *spake right*; God could not get a good word from them, nothing on which to ground any favour to them, or hopes concerning them. There was *none of them that spake aright*, none that repented him of his wickedness. Those that have sinned, then, and then only, *spake aright*, when they speak of repenting; and it is said when those that have made so much *work for repentance*, do not say a word of repenting. Not only did God not find any repenting of the national wickedness, which might have helped to empty the measure of public guilt, but none repented of that particular wickedness which he knew himself guilty of. (1.) They did not so much as take the first step toward repentance; they did not so much as say, *What have I done?* There was no motion towards it, not the least sign or token of it. Note, True repentance begins in a serious and impartial inquiry into ourselves, *what we have done*, arising from a conviction that we have done amiss. (2.) They were so far from repenting of their sins, that they went on resolutely in their sins; *Every one turned to his course*, his wicked course, that course of sin which he had chosen and accustomed himself to, *as the horse rushes into the battle*, eager upon action, and scornful to be curbed. How the horse rushes into the battle, is elegantly described, Job xxxix. 21, &c.

He mocks at fear, and is not affrighted. Thus the daring sinner laughs at the threatenings of the word as bugbears, and runs violently upon the instruments of death and slaughter, and nothing will be restrained from him.

III. They would not attend to the dictates of providence, nor understand the voice of God in them, *v. 7.* 1. It is an instance of their sottishness, that, though they are *God's people*, and therefore should readily understand his mind, upon every intimation of it, yet they *know not the judgment of the Lord*, they apprehend not the meaning either of a mercy or of an affliction, not how to accommodate themselves to either, or to answer God's intention in either. They *know not* how to improve the seasons of grace that God affords them when he sends them his prophets, nor how to make use of the rebukes they are under when *his voice cries in the city*. They *discern not the signs of the times*, (*Matth. xvi. 3.*) nor are aware how God is dealing with them. They know not that *way of duty*, which God had prescribed them, though it be written both in their hearts and in their books. 2. It is an aggravation of their sottishness, that there is so much sagacity in the inferior creatures. *The stork in the heaven* knows her appointed times of coming and continuing; so do other season-birds, *the turtle, the crane, and the swallow*; these by a natural instinct change their quarters, as the temper of the air alters; they come when the spring comes, and are gone, we know not whither, when the winter approaches; probably, into warmer climates, as some birds come with winter, and are gone when that is over.

IV. They would not attend to the dictates of the written word. They say, *We are wise*; but how can they say so? With what face can they pretend to any thing of wisdom, when they do not understand themselves so well as the brute creatures? Why, truly, they think they are wise, because *the law of the Lord is with them*, the book of the law and the interpreters of it; and their neighbours, for the same reason, conclude *they are wise*; *Deut. iv. 6.* But their pretensions are groundless for all this; *Lo, certainly in vain made he it*; surely never any people had Bibles to so little purpose as they have. They might as well have been without the law, unless they had made a better use of it. God has indeed made it able to make men wise to salvation, but as to them it is made so *in vain*, for they are *never the wiser* for it; *The pen of the scribes*, of those that first wrote the law, and of those that now write expositions of it, are *in vain*. Both the favour of their God, and the labour of their scribes, are lost upon them; they receive the grace of God therein in vain. Note, There are many that enjoy abundance of the means of grace, that have great plenty of Bibles and ministers, but they have them *in vain*; they do not answer the end of their having them. But it might be said, They have some wise men among them, to whom *the law and the pen of the scribes* are not *in vain*. To this it is answered, (*v. 9.*) *The wise men are ashamed*, they have reason to be so, that they have not made a better use of their wisdom, and lived more up to it. *They are confounded and taken*; all their wisdom has not served to keep them from those courses that tend to their ruin. They are *taken* in the same snares that others of their neighbours, who have not pretended to so much wisdom, are taken in, and filled with the same *confusion*. Those that have more knowledge than others, and yet do no better than others for their own souls, have reason to be *ashamed*. They talk of their wisdom, but, *Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord*; they would not be governed by it, would not follow its direction, would not do what they knew; and then *what wis-*

dom is in them? None to any purpose; none that will be found to their praise at the great day, how much soever it is found to their pride now.

The pretenders to wisdom, who said, "*We are wise*, and the law of the Lord is with us," were *the priests and the false prophets*; with them the prophet here deals plainly.

1. He threatens the judgments of God against them. Their families and estates shall be ruined; (*v. 10.*) *Their wives shall be given to others*, when they are taken captives, and *their fields* shall be taken from them by the victorious enemy, and shall be given to *those that shall inherit them*; not only strip them for once, but take possession of them as their own, and acquire a property in them, which they shall transmit to their posterity. And, (*v. 12.*) notwithstanding all their pretensions to wisdom and sanctity, *they fall among them that fall*; for *if the blind lead the blind*, both shall fall together into the ditch. *In the time of their visitation*, when the wickedness of the land comes to be inquired into, it will be found that they have contributed to it more than any, and therefore they shall be sure to be *cast down* and cast out.

2. He gives a reason for these judgments, (*v. 10, 12.*) even the same account of their badness which we meet with before, (*ch. vi. 13.—15.*) where it was opened at large. (1.) They were greedy of the wealth of this world, which is bad enough in any, but worst in *prophets and priests*, who should be best acquainted with another world, and therefore should be most dead to this. But these, from the least to the greatest, were given to *covetousness*. *The priests teach for hire*, and *the prophets divine for money*, *Mic. iii. 11.* (2.) They made no conscience of speaking truth, no not when they spake as priests and prophets; *Every one deals falsely*; looks one way, and rows another. There is no such thing as sincerity among them. (3.) They flattered people in their sins, and so flattered them into destruction. They pretended to be the physicians of the state, but knew not how to apply proper remedies to its growing maladies; they *healed them slightly*, killed the patient with palliative cures; silencing their fears and complaints with "*Peace, peace*, all is well, and there is no danger," when the God of heaven was proceeding in his controversy with them, so that there could be *no peace* to them. (4.) When it was made to appear how basely they prevaricated, they were not at all ashamed of it, but rather gloried in it; (*v. 12.*) *They could not blush*, so perfectly lost were they to all sense of virtue and honour; when they were convicted of the grossest forgeries, they would justify what they had done, and laugh at those whom they had imposed upon. Such as these were ripe for ruin.

13. I will surely consume them, saith the LORD: *there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig-tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them.* 14. Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defenced cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us waters of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD. 15. We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble! 16. The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan; the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have

devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein. 17. For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which *will not be charmed*, and they shall bite you, saith the Lord. 18. *When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me.* 19. Behold, the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people, because of them that dwell in a far country. *Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in her? why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?* 20. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. 21. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. 22. *Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*

In these verses, we have,

I. God threatening the destruction of a sinful people. He has borne long with them, but they are still more and more provoking, and therefore now their ruin is resolved on; *I will surely consume them*; (v. 13.) *consuming I will consume them*, not only surely, but utterly, consume them; will follow them with one judgment after another, till they are quite consumed; it is a *consumption determined*, Isa. x. 23.

1. They shall be quite stripped of all their comforts; (v. 13.) *There shall be no grapes on the vine.* Some understand it as intimating their sin; God came looking for grapes from this vineyard, seeking fruit upon this fig-tree, but he found none, (as Isa. v. 2. Luke xiii. 6.) nay, they had not so much as leaves, Matth. xxi. 19. But it is rather to be understood of God's judgments upon them; and may be meant *literally*; The enemy shall seize the fruits of the earth, shall pluck the grapes and figs for themselves, and beat down the very leaves with them; or, rather, *figuratively*; They shall be deprived of all their comforts, and shall have nothing left them wherewith to *make glad their hearts*. It is expounded in the last clause, *The things that I have given them shall pass away from them*. Note, God's gifts are upon condition, and revocable upon non-performance of the condition. Mercies abused are forfeited, and it is just with God to take the forfeiture.

2. They shall be set upon by all manner of grievances, and surrounded with calamities; (v. 17.) *I will send serpents among you*, the Chaldean army, fiery serpents, flying serpents, cockatrices; these shall bite them with their venomous teeth, give them wounds that shall be mortal: and they shall not be charmed, as some serpents used to be, with music. These are serpents of another nature, that are not so wrought upon; or they are as the deaf adder, that stops her ear, and will not hear the voice of the charmer. The enemies are so intent upon making slaughter, that it will be to no purpose to accost them gently, or offer any thing to pacify them or mollify them, or to bring them to a better temper. No peace with God, therefore none with them.

II. The people sinking into despair under the pressure of those calamities. They that were void of fear, (when the trouble was at a distance,) and set it at defiance, are void of hope now that it breaks

in upon them, and have no heart, either to make head against it, or to bear up under it, v. 14. They cannot think themselves safe in the open villages; *Why do we sit still here? Let us assemble and go in a body into the defended cities.* Though they could expect no other than to be surely cut off there at last, yet not so soon as in the country, and therefore, *Let us go, and be silent there*: let us attempt nothing, nor so much as make a complaint; for to what purpose? It is not a *submissive*, but a *sullen*, silence, that they here condemn themselves to. Those that are most jovial in their prosperity, commonly despond most, and are most melancholy, in trouble.

Now observe what it is that sinks them.

1. They are sensible that God is angry with them; *The Lord our God has put us to silence*, has struck us with astonishment, and given us water of gall to drink, which is both bitter and stupifying, or intoxicating; (Ps. lx. 3.) *Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.* We had better sit still than rise up and fall; better say nothing than say nothing to the purpose. To what purpose is it to contend with our fate, when God himself is become our Enemy, and fights against us? *Because we have sinned against the Lord*, therefore we are brought to this plunge." This may be taken as the language, (1.) Of their indignation. They seem to quarrel with God, as if he had dealt hardly with them, in putting them to silence, not permitting them to speak for themselves, and then telling them, that it was because they had sinned against him. Thus men's foolishness perverts their way, and then their hearts fret against the Lord. Or, rather, (2.) Of their convictions. At length they begin to see the hand of God lifted up against them, and stretched out in the calamities under which they are now groaning, and to own that they have provoked him to contend with them. Note, Sooner or later, God will bring the most obstinate to acknowledge both his providence and his justice, in all the troubles they are brought into; to see a *d* say, both that it is *his hand*, and that *he is righteous*.

2. They are sensible that the enemy is likely to be too hard for them, v. 16. They are soon apprehensive that it is to no purpose to make head against such a mighty force; they and their people are quite dispirited; and when the courage of a nation is gone, their numbers will stand them in little stead. *The snorting of the horses was heard from Dan*, the report of the formidable strength of their cavalry was soon carried all the nation over, and every body trembled at the sound of the neighing of his steeds; for they are come, and there is no opposing them; they have devoured the land, and all that is in the city; both town and country are laid waste before them, not only the wealth, but the inhabitants of both, *those that dwell therein*. Note, When God appears against us, every thing else that is against us appears very formidable; whereas if he be for us, every thing appears very despicable, Rom. viii. 31.

3. They are disappointed in their expectations of deliverance out of their troubles, as they had been surprised when their trouble came upon them; and this double disappointment very much aggravated their calamity. (1.) The trouble came when they little expected it; (v. 15.) *We looked for peace*, the continuance of our peace, but no good came, no good news from abroad; we looked for a time of health and prosperity to our nation, but behold trouble, the alarms of war; for, as it follows, (v. 16.) *the noise of the enemies' horses was heard from Dan*. Their false prophets had cried, *Peace, peace*, to them, which made it the more terrible, when the scene of war opened on a sudden. This complaint will occur again, ch. xiv. 19. (2.) The deliverance

did not come, when they had long expected it; (v. 20.) *The harvest is past, the summer is ended*; there is a great deal of time gone. Harvest and summer are parts of the year, and when they are gone, the year draws toward a conclusion; so the meaning is, "One year passes after another, one campaign after another, and yet our affairs are in as bad a posture as ever they were; no relief comes, nor is any thing done towards it; *We are not saved.*" Nay, there is a great deal of opportunity lost, the season of action is over and slipt, the *summer* and *harvest* are gone, and a cold and melancholy winter succeeds. Note, The salvation of God's church and people often goes on very slowly, and God keeps his people long in the expectation of it, for wise and holy ends. Nay, they stand in their own light, and put a bar in their own door, and are not saved, because they are not ready for salvation.

4. They are deceived in those things which were their confidence, and which they thought would have secured their peace to them; (v. 19.) *The daughter of my people* cries, cries aloud, *because of them that dwell in a far country*, because of the foreign enemy that invades them, that comes from a far country to take possession of ours; this occasions the cry; and what is the cry? It is this; *Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her?* These were the two things that they had all along buoyed up themselves with, and depended upon. (1.) That they had among them the temple of God, and the tokens of his special presence with them: the common cant was, "*Is not the Lord in Zion?*" What danger then need we fear?" And they held by this when the trouble was breaking in upon them; "Surely we shall do well enough, for have we not God among us?" But when it grew to an extremity, it was an aggravation of their misery that they had thus flattered themselves. (2.) That they had the throne of the house of David; as they had a temple, so they had a monarch, *jure divino—by divine right*; *Is not Zion's king in her?* And will not Zion's God protect Zion's king and his kingdom? Surely he will; but why does he not? "What," (say they,) "has Zion neither a God nor a king to stand by her and help her, that she is thus run down, and likely to be ruined?" This outcry of theirs reflects upon God, as if his power and promise were broken or weakened; and therefore he returns an answer to it immediately, *Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images?* They quarrel with God, as if he had dealt unkindly by them in forsaking them, whereas they by their idolatry had driven him from them; they have withdrawn from their allegiance to him, and so have thrown themselves out of his protection. *They fret themselves and, curse their king and their God,* (Isa. viii. 21.) when it is their own sin that separates between them and God; (Isa. lix. 2.) they feared not the Lord, and then what can a king do for them? Hos. x. 3.

III. We have here the prophet himself bewailing the calamity and ruin of his people; for there were more of the lamentations of Jeremiah than those we find in the book that bears that title. Observe here,

1. How great his griefs were. He was an eyewitness of the desolations of his country, and saw those things which by the spirit of prophecy he had foreseen. In the foresight, much more in the sight of them, he cries out, "*My heart is faint in me, I sink, I die away* at the consideration of it, v. 18. *When I would comfort myself against my sorrow, I do but labour in vain; nay, every attempt to alleviate the grief does but aggravate it.*" It is our wisdom and duty, under mournful events, to do what we can to *comfort ourselves against our sorrow*, by suggesting to ourselves such considerations

as are proper to allay the grief, and balance the grievance. But sometimes the sorrow is such, that, the more it is repressed, the more strongly it recoils. It may sometimes be the case of very good men, as of the prophet here, whose soul refused to be comforted, and *fainted* at the cordial, Ps. lxxvii. 2, 3. He tells, (v. 21.) what was the matter; "*It is for the hurt of the daughter of my people, that I am thus hurt*; it is for their sin, and the miseries they have brought upon themselves by it; it is for this, that *I am black*, that I look black, that I go in black as mourners do, and that *astonishment has taken hold on me*, so that I know not what to do, nor which way to turn." Note, The miseries of our country ought to be very much the grief of our souls. A *gracious* spirit will be a *public* spirit, a *tender* spirit, a *mourning* spirit. It becomes us to lament the miseries of our fellow-creatures, much more to lay to heart the calamities of our country, and especially of the church of God, to *grieve for the affliction of Joseph*. Jeremiah had prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, and though the truth of his prophecy was questioned, yet he did not rejoice in the proof of the truth of it by the accomplishment of it, preferring the welfare of his country before his own reputation. If Jerusalem had repented and been spared, he would have been far from fretting, as Jonah did. Jeremiah had many enemies in Judah and Jerusalem, that hated and reproached and persecuted him; and in the judgments brought upon them, God reckoned with them for it, and pleaded his prophets cause; yet he was far from rejoicing in it, so truly did he forgive his enemies, and desire that God would forgive them.

2. How small his hopes were; (v. 22.) "*Is there no balm in Gilead?* No medicine proper for a sick and dying kingdom? Is there no *physician* there? No skilful, faithful hand to apply the medicine?" He looks upon the case to be deplorable, and past relief. There is *no balm in Gilead*, that can cure the disease of sin; no *physician there*, that can restore the health of a nation quite overrun by such a foreign army as that of the Chaldeans. The desolations made are irreparable, and the disease is presently come to such a height, that there is no checking it. Or, this verse may be understood as laying all the blame of the incurableness of their disease upon themselves; and so the question must be answered affirmatively; *Is there no balm in Gilead? No physician there?* Yes, certainly there is; God is able to help and heal them, there is a sufficiency in him to redress all their grievances. Gilead was a place in their own land, not far off; they had among themselves God's law and his prophets, with the help of which they might have been brought to repentance, and their ruin might have been prevented; they had princes and priests, whose business it was to reform the nation, and redress their grievances. What could have been done more than has been done for their recovery? *Why then is not their health restored?* Certainly it was not owing to God, but to themselves; it was not for want of *balm*, and a *physician*, but because they would not admit the application, nor submit to the methods of cure. The physician and physic were both ready, but the patient was wilful and irregular, would not be tied to rules, but must be humoured. Note, If sinners die of their wounds, their blood is upon their own heads. The blood of Christ is *balm in Gilead*, his Spirit is the *Physician there*, both sufficient, all-sufficient, so that they might have been healed, but would not.

CHAP. IX.

In this chapter, the prophet goes on faithfully to reprove sin, and to threaten God's judgments for it, and yet bitterly to lament both, as one that neither rejoiced at

quity, nor was glad at calamities. I. He here expresses his great grief for the miseries of Judah and Jerusalem, and his detestation of their sins, which brought those miseries upon them, v. 1. . . 11. II. He justifies God in the greatness of the destruction brought upon them, v. 9, 12. . . 16. III. He calls upon others to bewail the woful ease of Judah and Jerusalem, v. 17. . . 23. IV. He shows them the folly and vanity of trusting in their own strength or wisdom, or the privileges of their circumcision, or any thing but God only, v. 23. . . 26.

t. **O** that my head were waters, and I my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! 2. Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. 3. And they bend their tongue like their bow for lies; but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD. 4. Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. 5. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity. 6. Thy habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD. 7. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people? 8. Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait. 9. Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? 10. For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burnt up, so that none can pass through them; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle: both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone. 11. And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.

The prophet, being commissioned both to foretell the destruction coming upon Judah and Jerusalem, and to point out the sin for which that destruction was brought upon them, here, as elsewhere, speaks of both very feelingly: what he said of both came from the heart, and therefore one would have thought it should have reached to the heart.

I. He abandons himself to sorrow, in consideration of the calamitous condition of his people, which he sadly laments, as one that preferred Jerusalem before his chief joy, and her grievances before his chief sorrows.

1. He laments the slaughter of the persons; the

bloodshed, and the lives lost; (v. 1.) "*O that my head were waters, quite melted and dissolved with grief, that so mine eyes might be fountains of tears, weeping abundance, continually, and without intermission, still sending forth fresh floods of tears, as there still occur fresh occasions for them!*" The same word in Hebrew signifies both the eye and a fountain, as if in this land of sorrows our eyes were designed rather for weeping than seeing. Jeremiah wept much, and yet wished he could weep more, that he might affect a stupid people, and reuse them to a due sense of the hand of God gone out against them. Note, It becomes us, while we are here in this vale of tears, to conform to the temper of the climate, and to sow in tears. *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted* hereafter; but let them expect that while they are here, the clouds will still return after the rain. While we find our hearts such fountains of sin, it is fit that our eyes should be fountains of tears. But Jeremiah's grief here is upon the public account: he would weep day and night, not so much for the death of his own near relations, but for the slain of the daughter of his people, the multitudes of his countrymen that fell by the sword of war. Note, When we hear of the number of the slain in great battles and sieges, we ought to be much affected with it, and not to make a light matter of it; yea, though they be not of the daughter of our people, for, whatever people they are of, they are of the same human nature with us; and there are so many precious lives lost, as dear to them as ours to us, and so many precious souls gone into eternity.

2. He laments the desolations of the country. This he brings in, v. 10. (for impassioned mourners are not often very methodical in their discourses,) "*Not for the towns and cities merely, but for the mountains, will I take up a weeping and wailing;*" not barren mountains, but the fruitful hills with which Judea abounded; and for the habitations of the wilderness, or, rather, the pastures of the plain, that used to be clothed with flocks, or covered over with corn; and a goodly sight it was; but now they are burnt up by the Chaldean army, which, according to the custom of war, destroyed the forage, and carried off all the cattle; so that no one dares to pass through them, for fear of meeting with some parties of the enemy; no one cares to pass through them, every thing looks so melancholy and frightful; no one has any business to pass through them, for they hear not the voice of the cattle there as usual, the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen, that grateful music to the owners; nay, both the fowl of the heavens, and the beasts, are fled, either frightened away by the rude noises and terrible fires which the enemies make, or forced away because there is no subsistence for them. Note, God has many ways of turning a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein; and the havoc war makes in a country cannot but be for a lamentation to all tender spirits, for it is a tragedy which destroys the stage it is acted on.

II. He abandons himself to solitude, in consideration of the scandalous character and conduct of his people. Though he dwells in Judah where God is known, in Salem where his tabernacle is, yet he is ready to cry out, *Who is me that I sojourn in Mesec!* Ps. cxx. 5. While all his neighbours are fleeing to the defended cities, and Jerusalem especially, in dread of the enemies' rage, (ch. iv. 5, 6.) he is contriving to retire into some desert, in detestation of his people's sin; (v. 2.) "*O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, such a lonely cottage to dwell in as they have in the deserts of Arabia, which are uninhabited, for travellers to repose themselves in, that I may leave my people, and go from them!*" Not only because of the

all usages they gave him, he would rather venture himself among the wild beasts of the desert than among such treacherous, barbarous people; but principally, because his *righteous soul was vexed from day to day*, as Lot's was in Sodom, with the *wickedness of their conversation*, 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. This does not bespeak any intention or resolution that he had thus to retire. God had cut him out work among them, which he must not quit for his own ease; we must not *go out of the world*, bad as it is, before our time: if he could not reform them, he could bear a testimony against them; if he could not do good to many, yet he might to some. But his language bespeaks the temptation he was in to leave them, a threatening that they should be deprived of his ministry, and especially the holy indignation he had against their wickedness, which continued so abominable, notwithstanding all the pains he had taken with them to reclaim them. It made him even weary of his life to see them dishonouring God as they did, and destroying themselves. Time was, when the place which God had chosen to put his name there, was the desire and delight of good men. David, in a wilderness, longed to be again in the courts of God's house; but now Jeremiah, in the courts of God's house, (for there he was when he said this,) wishes himself in a *wilderness*. Those have made themselves very miserable, that have made God's people and ministers weary of them, and willing to get from them.

Now, to justify his willingness to leave them, he shows,

1. What he himself had observed among them. He would not think of leaving them because they were *poor*, and in distress, but because they were *wicked*.

(1.) They were *filthy*; they be all adulterers; that is, the generality of them are, *ch. v. 8*. They all either practised this sin, or connived at those that did. Lewdness and uncleanness constituted that crying sin of Sodom, at which righteous Lot was *vexed in soul*, and it is a sin that renders men loathsome in the eyes of God and all good men; it makes men an abomination.

(2.) They were *false*. This is the sin that is most enlarged upon here; they that had been unfaithful to their God, were so to one another, and it was a part of their punishment as well as their sin, for even those that love to *cheat*, yet hate to be *cheated*. [1.] Go into their *solemn meetings*, either for the exercises of religion, for the administration of justice, or for commerce, either to church, to court, or to the exchange; and they are an *assembly of treacherous men*, they are so by consent, they strengthen one another's hands in doing any thing that is *perfidious*. There they will cheat deliberately and industriously, with design, with a malicious design; for they *bend their tongue, like their bow, for lies*, with a great deal of craft; their tongues are *fitted* for lying, as a bow that is bent is for shooting, and are as constantly used for that purpose. Their tongue turns as naturally to a lie as the bow to the string. But they are not *valiant for the truth upon the earth*. Their tongues are like a bow strung, with which they might do good service, if they would use the art and resolution which they are so much masters of, in the cause of truth; but they will not do so. They appear not in defence of the truths of God, which were delivered to them by the prophets; but even those that could not deny them to be truths, were content to see them run down. In the administration of justice, they have not courage to stand by an honest cause that has truth on its side, if greatness and power be on the other side. Those that will be faithful to the truth must be valiant for it, and not be daunted by the opposition given to it, nor fear the face of man.

They are not valiant for truth in the land, the land which has truth for the glory of it. Truth is fallen in the land, and they dare not lend a hand to help it up, *Is. lix. 14, 15*. We must answer, another day not only for our enmity in *opposing* truth, but for our cowardice in *defending* it. [2.] Go into their *families*, and you will find they will cheat their own brethren, (*every brother will utterly supplant*;) they will trip up one another's heels if they can, for they lie at the catch, to seek all advantages against those they hope to make a hand of. Jacob had his name from *supplanting*, it is the word here used, they followed him in his name, but not in his true character, *without guile*. So very false are they, that you cannot *trust in a brother*, but must stand as much upon your guard, as if you were dealing with a stranger, with a Canaanite that has *balances of deceit in his hand*. Things are come to an ill pass indeed, when a man cannot put confidence in his own brother. [3.] Go into *company*, and observe both their commerce and their conversation, and you will find there is nothing of sincerity or common honesty among them; *Nec hospes ab hospite tutus—The host and the guest are in danger from each other*. The best advice a wise man can give you, is, to take heed every one of his neighbour, nay, of his friend, (so some read it,) of him whom he has befriended, and who pretends friendship to him. No man thinks himself bound to be either grateful or sincere. Take them in their converse; and every neighbour will walk with slander, they care not what ill they say one of another, though ever so false; that way that the slander goes they will go; they will walk with it. They will walk about from house to house too, carrying slanders along with them, all the ill-natured stories they can pick up, or invent, to make mischief. Take them in their trading and bargaining; and they will deceive every one his neighbour, will say any thing, though they know it to be false, for their own advantage. Nay, they will lie for lying sake, to keep their tongues in use to it, for they will not speak the truth, but will tell a deliberate lie, and laugh at it when they have done.

That which aggravates the sin of this false and lying generation, is, *First*, That they are *ingenious* to sin; They have taught their tongue to speak lies, implying, that, through the reluctances of natural conscience, they found it difficult to bring themselves to it. Their tongue would have spoken truth, but they taught it to speak lies, and by degrees have made themselves masters of the art of lying, and have got such a habit of it, that use has made it a second nature to them. They learned it when they were young, (for the wicked are estranged from the womb, speaking lies, *Ps. lviii. 3*.) and now they are grown dexterous at it. *Secondly*, That they are *industrious* to sin; They weary themselves to commit iniquity; they put a force upon their consciences, to bring themselves to it; they tire out their convictions by offering them continual violence, and they take a great deal of pains, till they have even spent themselves in bringing about their malicious designs. They are wearied with their sinful pursuits, and yet not weary of them. The service of sin is a perfect drudgery; men run themselves out of breath in it, and put themselves to a great deal of toil, to damn their own souls. *Thirdly*, That they grew worse and worse; (*v. 3*.) They proceed from evil to evil, from one sin to another, from one degree of sin to another. They began with lesser sins; (*Nemo repente fit turpissimus—No one reaches the height of vice at once*;) they began with equivocating and bantering, but at last came to downright lying. And they are now proceeding to greater sins yet, for they know not me, saith the Lord. Where men have no knowledge of God, or no consideration of

what they have known of him, what good can be expected from them? Men's ignorance of God is the cause of all their ill conduct one towards another.

2. The prophet shows what God had informed him of their wickedness, and what he had determined against them.

(1.) God had *marked their sin*. He could tell the prophet, (and he speaks of it with compassion,) what sort of people they were, that he had to deal with. *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest*, Rev. ii. 13. So here, (v. 6.) "*Thy habitation is in the midst of deceit, all about thee are addicted to it; therefore stand upon thy guard.*" *If all men are liars*, it concerns us to *beware of men*, and to be *wise as serpents*. They are deceitful men, therefore there is little hope of thy doing any good among them; for make things ever so plain, they have some trick or other wherewith to shuffle off their convictions. This charge is enlarged upon, v. 8. Their tongue was a *bow bent*, (v. 3.) plotting and preparing mischief; here it is an *arrow shot out*, putting in execution what they had projected. It is as a *slaying arrow*; so some readings of the original have it: their tongue has been to many an instrument of death. *They speak peaceably to their neighbours*, against whom they are at the same time *lying in wait*: as Joab kissed Abner, when he was about to kill him; and Cain, that he might not be suspected of any ill design, *talked with his brother* freely and familiarly. Note, Fair words, when they are not attended with good intentions, are *despicable*, but when they are intended as a cloak and cover for wicked intentions, they are *abominable*. While they did all this injury to one another, they put a great contempt upon God; "Not only they *know not me*, but, (v. 6.) *through deceit*, through the delusions of the false prophets, *they refuse to know me*; they are so cheated into a good opinion of their own ways, the ways of their own heart, that they desire not the knowledge of my ways." Or, They are so wedded to this sinful course which they are in, and so bewitched with that, and its gains, that they will by no means admit the *knowledge of God*, because that would be a check upon them in their sins. This is the ruin of sinners, they might be taught the good knowledge of the Lord, and they will not learn it. Where no knowledge of God is, what good can be expected? Hos. iv. 1.

(2.) He had *marked them for ruin*, v. 7, 9, 11. Those that will not *know God* as their Lawgiver, shall be made to know him as their Judge. God determines here to bring his judgments upon them, for the refusing of some, and the ruining of the rest.

[1.] Some shall be *refined*; (v. 7.) "Because they are thus corrupt, *behold, I will melt them, and try them*, will bring them into trouble, and see what that will do toward bringing them to repentance; whether the furnace of affliction will purify them from their dross, and whether, when they are melted, they will be new-cast in a better mould." He will make trial of lesser afflictions, before he brings upon them utter destruction, for he *desires not the death of sinners*. They shall not be *rejected as reprobate silver*, till the Founder has *melted in vain*, ch. vi. 29, 30. *For how shall I do for the daughters of my people?* He speaks as one consulting with himself what to do with them, that might be for the best, and as one that could not find in his heart to cast them off, and give them up to ruin, till he had first tried all means likely to bring them to repentance. Or, "*How else shall I do for them?*" They are grown so very corrupt, that there is no other way with them but to put them into the furnace; what other course can I take with them? (Isa. v. 4, 5.) It is *the daughter of my people*, and I must do something to vindicate my own honour, which will be reflected upon if I connive at their wickedness; I

must do something to reduce and reform them." A parent corrects his own children because they are *his own*. Note, When God afflicts his people, it is with a gracious design to mollify and reduce them; it is but when need is, and when he knows it is the best method he can use.

[2.] The rest shall be *ruined*; (v. 9.) *Shall I not visit for these things?* Fraud and falsehood are sins which God hates, and which he will reckon for; "*Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this*, that is so universally corrupt, and, by its impudence in sin, even dares and defies divine vengeance? The sentence is past, the decree is gone forth, v. 11. *I will make Jerusalem heaps of rubbish*, and lay it in such ruins, that it shall be fit for nothing but to be a *den of dragons*; and the *cities of Juda shall be a desolation*." God makes them so, for he gives the enemy warrant and power to do it: but why is the *holy city* made a heap? The answer is ready, Because it was become an *unholy one*.

12. Who is the wise man, that may understand this; and *who is he* to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth and is burnt up like a wilderness, that none passeth through? 13. And the LORD saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; 14. But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them: 15. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, *even* this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. 16. I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them. 17. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning *women*, that they may come: 18. And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters. 19. For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion, How are we spoiled! we are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast us out. 20. Yet hear the word of the LORD, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation: 21. For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets. 22. Speak, Thus saith the LORD, Even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvest-man, and none shall gather them.

Two things the prophet designs in these verses, with reference to the approaching destruction of

Juda. and Jerusalem. 1. To convince people of the justice of God in it, that they had by sin brought it upon themselves, and that therefore they had no reason to quarrel with God, who did them no wrong at all, but a great deal of reason to fall out with their sins, which did them all this mischief. 2. To affect people with the greatness of the desolation that was coming, and the miserable effects of it, that by a terrible prospect of it they might be awakened to repentance and reformation, which was the only way to prevent it, or, at least, mitigate their own share in it. This being designed,

I. He calls for the *thinking men*, by them to show people the equity of God's proceedings, though they seemed harsh and severe; (v. 12.) "*Who, where, is the wise man, or the prophet, to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken?*" You boast of your wisdom, and of the prophets you have among you; produce me any one that has but the free use of human reason, or any acquaintance with divine revelation, and he will soon *understand this himself*, and it will be so clear to him, that he will be ready to *declare it* to others, that there is a just ground of God's controversy with this people." Do these *wise men* inquire, *For what does the land perish?* What is the matter, that such a change is made with this land? It used to be a land that God cared for, and he had his eyes upon it for good; (Deut. xi. 12.) but it is now a land that he has forsaken, and that his face is against it: it used to flourish as the garden of the Lord, and to be replenished with inhabitants; but now it is burnt up like a wilderness, that *none passeth through it*, much less cares to settle in it. It was supposed, long ago, that it would be asked, when it came to this, *Wherefore has the Lord done thus unto this land? What means the heat of this great anger?* (Deut. xxix. 24.) to which question God here gives a full answer, before which all flesh must be silent. He produces out of the record,

1. The indictment preferred and proved against them, upon which they had been found guilty, v. 13, 14. It is charged upon them, and it cannot be denied, (1.) That they have revolted from their allegiance to their rightful Sovereign: *therefore God has forsaken his land*, and justly, because they have *forsaken his law*, which he had so plainly, so fully, so frequently *set before them*, and had not observed his orders, *not obeyed his voice*, nor *walked in the ways* that he had appointed. Here their wickedness began, in the omission of their duty to their God, and a contempt of his authority. But it did not end here. It is further charged upon them, (2.) That they have entered themselves into the service of pretenders and usurpers, have not only withdrawn themselves from their obedience to their Prince, but have taken up arms against him. For, [1.] They have acted according to the dictates of their own lusts, have set up their own will, the wills of the flesh, and the carnal mind, in competition with, and contradiction to, the will of God; *They have walked after the imagination of their own heart*; they would do as they pleased, whatever God and conscience said to the contrary. [2.] They have worshipped the creatures of their own fancy, the work of their own hands, according to the tradition received from their fathers; *They have walked after Baalim*; the word is plural; they had many Baals, Bael-peor, and Baal-berith, the Baal of this place, and the Baal of the other place; for they had *lords many*, which *their fathers taught them* to worship, but which the God of their fathers had again and again forbidden. This was it for which *the land perished*. The King of kings never makes war thus upon his own subjects, but when they treacherously depart from him, and rebel against him, and it is become necessary by this means to chastise their rebellion, and reduce them to their allegiance; and

they themselves shall at length acknowledge that he is just in all that is brought upon them.

2. The judgment given upon this indictment, the sentence upon the convicted rebels, which must now be executed, for it was righteous, and nothing could be moved in arrest of it; *The Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, hath said it*; (v. 15, 16.) and who can reverse it? (1.) That all their comforts at home shall be poisoned and imbibed to them; *I will feed this people with worm wood*; or, rather, with *wolf-bane*, for it signifies an herb that is not wholesome, as wormwood is, though it be bitter, but some herb that is both nauseous and noxious; and I will give them *water of gall*, or *juice of hemlock*, or some other herb that is poisonous, *to drink*. Every thing about them, till it comes to their very meat and drink, shall be a terror and torment to them. God will *curse their blessings*, Mal. ii. 2. (2.) That their dispersion abroad shall be their destruction; (v. 16.) *I will scatter them among the heathen*. They are corrupted and debauched by their intimacy with the heathen, with whom they *mingled themselves*, and *learned their works*; and now they shall lose themselves there where they lost their virtue, *among the heathen*; they had violated the laws of that *truth*, which is the bond and cement of society and commerce, and addicted themselves to deceit and lying, and therefore are justly crumbled to dust, and *scattered among the heathen*. They set up gods which neither *they nor their fathers had known*, strange gods, new gods; (Deut. xxxii. 17.) and now God will put them among neighbours which *neither they nor their fathers have known*, which they can claim no acquaintance with, and therefore can expect no favour from. And yet, though they are *scattered* so as that they will not know where to find one another, God will know where to find them all out, (Ps. xxi. 8.) with that evil which still pursues impenitent sinners; *I will send a sword after them*, some killing judgment or other, *till I have consumed them*; for when God judges, he will overcome, when he *pursues*, he will *overtake*. And now we see *for what the land perishes*; all this desolation is the desert of *their deeds*, and the performance of *God's words*.

II. He calls for the *mourning women*, and engages them with their arts to affect people, and move their passion, to lament these sad calamities that were come, or coming, upon them, that the nation might be alarmed to prepare for them. *The Lord of hosts himself says, Call for the mourning women, that they may come*, v. 17. The scope of this is to show how very woful and lamentable the condition of this people was likely to be.

1. Here is work for the *counterfeit mourners*; Send for the *cunning women* that know how to compose mournful ditties, or, at least, to sing them in mournful tunes and accents, and therefore are made use of at funerals to supply the want of *true mourners*. Let these *take up a wailing* for us, v. 18. The deaths and funerals were so many, that people wept for them till they *have no more power to weep*, as those, 1 Sam. xxx. 4. Let *them* therefore do it now, whose trade it is; or, rather, it intimates the extreme sottishness and stupidity of the people, that had not to heart the judgments they were under, nor, even when there was so much *blood shed*, could find in their hearts to *shed a tear*. *They cry not when God binds them*, Job xxxvi. 13. God sent his *mourning prophets* to them, to call them to weeping and mourning, but his word in their mouths did not work upon their faith; rather therefore than they shall go laughing to their ruin, let the *mourning women* come, and try to work upon their fancy, *that their eyes may at least run down with tears*, and *their eyelids gush out with waters*. First, last, sinners must be weepers.

2. Here is work for the *real mourners*.

(1.) There is that which *is* a lamentation. The present scene is very tragical; (v. 19.) *A voice of wailing is heard out of Zion*; some make this to be the song of the mourning women; it is rather an echo to it, returned by those whose affections were moved by their wailings. In Zion the voice of joy and praise used to be heard, while the people kept close to God; but sin has altered the note, it is now the *voice of lamentation*. It should seem to be the voice of those who fled from all parts of the country to the *castle of Zion* for protection. Instead of rejoicing that they were got safe thither, they lamented that they were forced to seek for shelter there. *"How are we spoiled! How are we stripped of all our possessions! We are greatly confounded, ashamed of ourselves and our poverty;"* for that is it that they complain of, that is it that they blush at the thoughts of, rather than of their sin; *We are confounded because we have forsaken the land, forced so to do by the enemy, not because we have forsaken the Lord, drawn aside of our own lust and enticed; because our dwellings have cast us out, not because our God has cast us off.* Thus unhumiliated hearts lament their calamity, but not their iniquity, the procuring cause of it.

(2.) There is more still to come, that *shall be for lamentation*. Things are *bad*, but they are likely to be *worse*. They whose land has *spued them out*, (as it did their predecessors the Canaanites, and justly, because they trod in their steps, (Lev. xviii. 28.) complain that they are driven into the city, but after awhile, those of the city, and they with them, shall be forced *thence* too; *Yet hear the word of the Lord*, he has something more to say to you; (v. 20.) let the *women* hear it, whose tender spirits are apt to receive the impressions of grief and fear, for the men will not heed it, will not give it a patient hearing. The prophets will be glad to preach to a congregation of women that *tremble at God's word*. Let your ear receive the word of God's mouth, and bid it welcome, though it be a word of terror. Let the women *teach their daughters wailing*; this intimates that the trouble shall *last long*; grief shall be entailed upon the generation to come. Young people are apt to love mirth, and expect mirth, and are disposed to be gay and airy; but let the *elder women teach the younger to be serious*, tell them what a vale of tears they must expect to find this world, and train them up among the mourners in Zion, Tit. ii. 4, 5. Let every one *teach her neighbour lamentation*; this intimates that the trouble shall *spread far*, shall go from house to house, people shall not need to sympathise with their friends, they shall all have cause enough to mourn for themselves. Note, Those that are themselves affected with the terrors of the Lord, should endeavour to affect others with them.

The judgment here threatened is made to look terrible.

[1.] Multitudes shall be slain, v. 21. Death shall ride in triumph, and there shall be no escaping his arrests, when he comes with commission, neither within doors nor without: not *within* doors, for let the doors be shut ever so fast, let them be ever so firmly locked and bolted, *death comes up into our windows*, like a thief in the night; it steals upon us ere we are aware. Nor does it thus boldly attack the cottages only, but it is entered *into our palaces*, the palaces of our princes and great men, though ever so *stately*, ever so *strongly built* and guarded. Note, No palaces can keep out death. Nor are those more safe that are *abroad*; death cuts off even *the children from without, and the young men from the streets*. The children who might have been spared by the enemy in *pity*, because they had never been *hurtful* to them, and the *young men*

who might have been spared in *policy*, because capable of being serviceable to them, shall fall together by the sword. It is usual now, even in the severest military executions, to put none to the sword but those that are found in arms; but then even the boys and girls playing in the streets were sacrificed to the fury of the conqueror.

[2.] Those that are slain shall be left *unburied*; (v. 22.) *Speak, Thus saith the Lord*, (for the confirmation and aggravation of what was before said,) *Even the carcases of men shall fall as dung, neglected, and left to be offensive to the smell, as dung is*. Common humanity obliges the survivors to bury the dead, even for their own sake; but here such numbers shall be slain, and those so dispersed all the country over, that it shall be an endless thing to bury them all, nor shall there be hands enough to do it, nor shall the conquerors permit it, and those that should do it, shall be overwhelmed with grief, so that they shall have no heart to do it. The dead bodies even of the fairest and strongest, when they have lain awhile, become *as dung*, such *vile bodies* have we. And here such multitudes shall fall, that their bodies shall lie as thick as *heaps of dung in the furrows of the field*, and no more notice shall be taken of them than of the *handfuls* which the *harvestman* drops for the gleaners, for *none shall gather them*, but they shall remain in sight, monuments of divine vengeance, that the eye of the impenitent survivors may affect their heart. *Slay them not, bury them not, lest my people forget*, Ps. lix. 11.

23. Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: 24. But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that I am the LORD which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD. 25. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all *them which are circumcised* with the uncircumcised; 26. Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all *that are* in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all *these nations are uncircumcised*, and all the house of Israel *are uncircumcised* in the heart.

The prophet had been endeavouring to possess this people with a holy fear of God and his judgments, to convince them both of sin and wrath; but still they had recourse to some sorry subterfuge or other, under which to shelter themselves from the conviction, and with which to excuse themselves in their obstinacy and carelessness: he therefore sets himself here to drive them from these refuges of lies, and to show them the insufficiency of them.

I. When they were told how inevitable the judgment would be, they plead the defence of their politics and powers, which, with the help of their wealth and treasure, they thought made their city impregnable. In answer to this he shows them the folly of trusting to, and boasting of, all these stays, while they have not a God in covenant to stay themselves upon, v. 23, 24.

Here he shows, 1. What we may *not* depend upon in a day of distress; *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom*, as if with the help of that he could outwit or countermince the enemy, or in the greatest

extremity find out some evasion or other; for a man's wisdom may fail him then when he needs it most, and he may be taken in his own craftiness. Ahithophel was *befooled*, and *counsellors* are often led *away spoiled*. But if a man's *policies* fail him, yet surely he may gain his point by might, and dint of courage; *no, let not the strong man glory in his strength*, for the battle is not always to the strong: David the stripling proves too hard for Goliath the giant. All human force is nothing *without God*, worse than nothing *against him*. But may not the *rich man's wealth be his strong city*? (Money answers all things.) No, *Let not the rich man glory in his riches*, for they may prove so far from sheltering him, that they may expose him, and make him the fairer mark. Let not the people boast of the *wise men*, and *mighty men*, and *rich men* that they have among them, as if they could make their part good against the Chaldeans, because they have *wise men* to advise concerning the war, *mighty men* to fight their battles, and *rich men* to bear the charges of the war. Let not particular persons think to escape the common calamity by their wisdom, might, or money, for all these will prove but *vain things for safety*.

2. He shows what we may depend upon in a day of distress, (1.) Our only comfort in trouble will be, that we have done our duty. They that *refused to know God*, (v. 6.) will boast in vain of their wisdom and wealth; but they that *know God* intelligently, that *understand aright that he is the Lord*, that have not only right apprehensions concerning his nature, and attributes, and relation to man, but receive and retain the impressions of them, may *glory in this*, it will be their rejoicing in the day of evil. (2.) Our only confidence in trouble will be, that, having through grace in some measure done our duty, we shall find God a God all-sufficient to us. We may *glory in this*, that, wherever we are, we have an acquaintance with, and an interest in, a God that *exercises loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness, in the earth*; that is not only just to all his creatures, and will do no wrong to any of them, but kind to all his children, and will protect them, and provide for them. For *in these things I delight*. God delights to show kindness, and to execute judgment himself, and is pleased with those who herein are *followers of him as dear children*. Those that have such knowledge of the glory of God as to be changed into the same image, and to partake of his holiness, find it to be their perfection and glory; and the God they thus faithfully *conform to*, they may cheerfully *confide in*, in their greatest straits. But the prophet intimates that the generality of this people took no care about this. Their *wisdom, and might, and riches*, were their joy and hope, which would end in grief and despair. But those few among them that had the knowledge of God, might please themselves with it, and boast themselves of it; it would stand them in better stead than *thousands of gold and silver*.

II. When they were told how provoking their sins were to God; they vainly pleaded the *covenant of their circumcision*. They were, undoubtedly, the people of God; as they had the temple of the Lord in their city, so they had the mark of his children in their flesh. "It is true, the Chaldean army has laid such and such nations waste, because they were *uncircumcised*, and therefore not under the protection of the Divine Providence, as we are." To this the prophet answers, That the days of visitation were now at hand, in which God would punish all wicked people, without making any distinction between the *circumcised and uncircumcised*, v. 25, 26. They had by sin profaned the crown of their peculiarity, and lived in common with the *uncircumcised nations*, and so had forfeited the benefit of that peculiarity, and must expect to fare never

the better for it. God will *punish the circumcised with the uncircumcised*. As the ignorance of the *uncircumcised* shall not excuse their wickedness, so neither shall the privileges of the *circumcised* excuse theirs, but they shall be *punished together*. Note, The Judge of all the earth is impartial, and none shall fare the better at his bar for any external advantages, but he will render to every man, *circumcised or uncircumcised*, according to his works. The condemnation of impenitent sinners that are *baptized*, will be as sure as, nay, and more severe than, that of impenitent sinners that are *unbaptized*. It would affect one to find here Judah industriously put between Egypt and Edom, as standing upon a level with them, and under the same doom, v. 26. These nations were forbidden a share in the Jews' privileges, Deut. xxiii. 3. But the Jews are here told that they shall share in their punishments. Those *in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness*, are supposed to be the Kedarenes, and those of the kingdoms of Hazor, as appears by comparing *ch. xlix. 28.—32*. Some think they are so called, because they dwelt as it were in a *corner* of the world: others, because they had the *hair of their head pulled into corners*. However that was, they were of those nations that were *uncircumcised in flesh*, and the Jews are ranked with them, and are as near to ruin for their sins as they; for *all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart*: they have the sign, but not the thing signified, *ch. iv. 4*. They are heathens in their hearts, strangers to God, and enemies in their minds by wicked works. Their hearts are disposed to idols, as the hearts of the *uncircumcised Gentiles* are. Note, The seals of the covenant, though they dignify us, and lay us under obligations, will not save us, unless the temper of our minds, and the tenor of our lives, agree with the covenant. That only is circumcision, and that baptism, which is *of the heart*, Rom. ii. 28, 29.

CHAP. X.

We may conjecture that the prophecy of this chapter was delivered after the first captivity, in the time of Jeconiah or Jehoiachin, when many were carried away to Babylon; for it has a double reference. I. To those that were carried away into the land of the Chaldeans, a country notorious above any other for idolatry and superstition: they are here cautioned against the infection of the place, not to learn the way of the heathen; (v. 1, 2.) for that their astrology and idolatry are both foolish things, (v. 3, 5.) and the worshippers of idols brutish, v. 8, 9. So it will appear in the day of their visitation, v. 14, 15. They are likewise exhorted to adhere firmly to the God of Israel, for that there is none like him, v. 6, 7. He is the true God, lives for ever, and has the government of the world; (v. 10, 13.) and his people are happy in him, v. 16. II. To those that yet remained in their own land. They are cautioned against security, and bid to expect distress, (v. 17, 18.) and that by a foreign enemy, which God would bring upon them for their sin, v. 20, 22. This calamity the prophet laments, (v. 19.) and prays for the mitigation of it, v. 23, 25.

1. **H**EAR ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: 2. Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. 3. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest (the work of the hands of the workman) with the axe: 4. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. 5. They are upright as the palm-tree, but speak not; they must needs be borne because they cannot go. Be not afraid of

them; for they cannot do evil, neither also *is it* in them to do good. 6. Forasmuch as *there is none* like unto thee, O LORD; thou *art* great, and thy name *is* great in might. 7. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise *men* of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, *there is none* like unto thee. 8. But they are altogether brutish and foolish; the stock *is* a doctrine of vanities. 9. Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple *is* their clothing; they *are* all the work of cunning men. 10. But the LORD *is* the true God, he *is* the living God, and an everlasting King; at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. 11. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, *even* they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. 12. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. 13. When he uttereth his voice, *there is* a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. 14. Every man is brutish in *his* knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image *is* falsehood, and *there is* no breath in them. 15. They *are* vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. 16. The Portion of Jacob *is* not like them: for he *is* the former of all *things*; and Israel *is* the rod of his inheritance: The LORD of hosts *is* his name.

The prophet Isaiah, when he prophesied of the captivity in Babylon, added warnings against idolatry, and largely exposed the sottishness of idolaters, not only because the temptations in Babylon would be in danger of drawing the Jews there to idolatry, but because the afflictions in Babylon were designed to cure them of their idolatry. Thus the prophet Jeremiah here arms people against the idolatrous usages and customs of the heathen, not only for the use of those that were gone to Babylon, but of those also that staid behind; that, being convinced and reclaimed by the word of God, the rod might be prevented, and it *is written for our learning*. Observe here,

I. A solemn charge given to the people of God, not to conform themselves to the ways and customs of the heathen. *Let the house of Israel* hear and receive this word from the God of Israel; "*Learn not the way of the heathen*, do not approve of it, nor think indifferently concerning it, much less imitate it, or accustom yourselves to it. Let not any of their customs steal in among you, (as they are

apt to do insensibly,) nor mingle themselves with your religion." Note, It ill becomes those that are taught of God, to *learn the way of the heathen*, and to think of worshipping the true God with such rites and ceremonies as they used in the worship of their false gods. See Deut. xii. 29.—31. It was the *way of the heathen* to worship the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars; to them they gave divine honours, and from them they expected divine favours, and therefore, according as the *signs of heaven* were, whether they were *auspicious* or *ominous*, they thought themselves *countenanced* or *discountenanced* by their deities; which made them observe those signs, the eclipses of the sun and moon, the conjunctions and oppositions of the planets, and all the unusual phenomena of the celestial globe, with a great deal of anxiety and trembling. Business was stopped, if any thing occurred that was thought to bode ill; if it did but *thunder on their left hand*, they were almost as if they had been thunderstruck. Now God would not have his people to be *dismayed at the signs of heaven*; to reverence the stars as deities, or to frighten themselves with any prognostications grounded upon them. Let them fear the God of heaven, and keep up a reverence of his providence, and then they need not be *dismayed at the signs of heaven*, for the stars in their courses fight not against any that are at peace with God. The *heathen are dismayed* at these signs, for they know no better; but let not the *house of Israel*, that are taught of God, be so.

II. Divers good reasons given to enforce this charge.

1. The way of the heathen is very ridiculous and absurd, and is condemned even by the dictates of right reason, v. 3. The statutes and ordinances of the heathen are vanity itself, they cannot stand the test of a rational disquisition. This is again and again insisted upon here, as it was by Isaiah. The Chaldeans valued themselves on their wisdom, in which they thought that they excelled all their neighbours; but the prophet here shows that they, and all others that worshipped idols, and expected help and relief from them, were brutish and sottish, and had not common sense.

(1.) Consider what the idol is that is worshipped; it was a *tree cut out of the forest* originally, it was fitted up by the *hands of the workman*, squared and sawed, and worked into shape; see Isa. xlv. 12, &c. But, after all, it was but the stock of a tree, fitter to make a gate-post of than any thing else. But to hide the wood, they *deck it with silver and gold*, they gild or lacker it, or they deck it with gold and silver lace, or cloth of tissue. They *fasten it* to its place, which they themselves have assigned it, *with nails and hammers*, that it fall not, or be thrown down, or stolen away, v. 4. The image is made straight enough, and it cannot be denied but that the workman did his part, for it *is upright as the palm-tree*, (v. 5.) it looks stately, and stands up as if it were going to speak to you, but it *cannot speak*, it is a poor dumb creature; nor can it take one step toward your relief. If there be any occasion for it to shift its place, it must be carried in procession, for it *cannot go*. Very fitly does it come in here, "*Be not afraid of them*, any more than of the signs of heaven; be not afraid of incurring their displeasure, for *they can do no evil*; be not afraid of forfeiting their favour, for *neither is it in them to do good*. If you think to mend the matter by mending the materials of which the idol is made, you deceive yourselves. Idols of *gold and silver* are as unworthy to be worshipped as *wooden gods*. The *stock is a doctrine of vanities*, v. 8. It teaches lies, teaches lies concerning God. It is an *instruction of vanities*, it *is wood*." It is probable that the idols of *gold and silver* had wood underneath for the *substratum*, and

then *silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish*, imported from beyond sea, and *gold from Uphaz, or Phaz*, which is sometimes rendered the *fine gold*, Ps. xxi. 3. A great deal of art is used and pains taken about it. They are not such ordinary mechanics that are employed about these, as about the *wooden gods*, v. 3. These are *cunning men*, it is the *work of the workman*, the graver must do his part, when it has passed through the *hands of the founder*. Those were but decked here and there with silver and gold, these are silver and gold all over. And that these gods might be revered as kings, *blue and purple are their clothing*, the colour of royal robes, (v. 9.) which amuses ignorant worshippers, but makes the matter no better. For what is the idol when it is made, and when they have made the best they can of it? He tells us, (v. 14.) *They are falsehood*, they are not what they pretend to be, but a great cheat put upon the world. They are worshipped as the gods that give us breath and life and sense, whereas they are lifeless, senseless things themselves, and *there is no breath in them; there is no spirit in them*, (so the word is,) they are not animated or inhabited, as they are supposed to be, by any *divine spirit or numen—divinity*, they are so far from being gods, that they have not so much as the *spirit of a beast that goes downward*. *They are vanity, and the work of errors*, v. 15. Inquire into the use of them; you will find *they are vanity*, they are good for nothing, no help is to be expected from them, nor any confidence put in them. They are a *deceitful work, works of illusions, or mere mockeries*: so some read the following clause. *They delude those that put their trust in them, make fools of them*, or, rather, they make fools of themselves. Inquire into the rise of them; they are *the work of errors*, grounded upon the grossest mistakes that ever men who pretended to reason were guilty of. They are the creatures of a deluded fancy; and the errors by which they were produced, they propagate among their worshippers.

(2.) Infer hence what the idolaters are that worship these idols; (v. 8.) *They are altogether brutish and foolish*; they that make them are like unto them, senseless and stupid, and there is *no spirit* in them, no use of reason, else they would never believe in such gods, no sense of honour, else they would never stoop to them, v. 14. *Every man that makes or worships idols, is become brutish in his knowledge*, brutish for want of knowledge, or brutish in that very thing which one would think they should be fully acquainted with; compare Jude 10. *What they know naturally, what they cannot but know by the light of nature, in those things, as brute beasts, they corrupt themselves*. Though in the works of creation they cannot but see the eternal power and godhead of the Creator, yet they are become *vain in their imaginations, not liking to retain God in their knowledge*. See Rom. i. 21, 28. Nay, whereas they thought it a piece of wisdom thus to multiply gods, it really was the greatest folly they could be guilty of. *The world by wisdom knew not God*, 1 Cor. i. 21. Rom. i. 22. *Every founder is himself confounded by the graven image*; when he has made it by a mistake, he is more and more confirmed in his mistake by it; he is bewildered, bewitched, and cannot disentangle himself from the snare; or, it is what he will one time or other be ashamed of.

2. The God of Israel is the one only living and true God, and those that have him for their God, need not make their application to any other; nay, to set up any other in competition with him is the greatest affront and injury that can be done him.

Let the house of Israel cleave to the God of Israel, and serve and worship him only. For,

(1.) He is a Nonsuch. Whatever men may set in competition with him, there is none to be compared with him. The prophet turns from speaking with the utmost disdain of the idols of the heathen, (as well he might,) to speak with the most profound and awful reverence of the God of Israel; (v. 6, 7.) "*Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord, none of all the heroes which the heathen have deified, and make such ado about; the dead men of whom they made dead images, and whom they worshipped. Some were deified and adored for their wisdom, but among all the wise men of the nations, the greatest philosophers or statesmen, as Apollo or Hermes, there is none like thee. Others were deified and adored for their dominion, but in all their royalty,*" (so it may be read,) "*among all their kings, as Saturn and Jupiter, there is none like unto thee.*" What is the glory of a man that invented an useful art, or founded a flourishing kingdom, (and these were grounds sufficient among the heathen to entitle men to an apotheosis,) compared with the glory of him that is the Creator of the world, and that *forms the spirit of man within him*? What is the glory of the greatest prince or potentate, compared with the glory of him whose *kingdom rules over all*? He acknowledges, (v. 6.) *O Lord, thou art great, infinite and immense, and thy name is great in might; thou hast all power, and art known to have it. Men's name is often beyond their might, they are thought to be greater than they are; but God's name is great, and no greater than he really is. And therefore who would not fear thee, O King of nations? Who would not choose to worship such a God as this, that can do every thing, rather than such dead idols as the heathen worship, that can do nothing? Who would not be afraid of offending or forsaking a God whose name is so great in might? Which of all the nations, if they understand themselves aright, would not fear him who is the King of nations?* Note, It is not only the house of Israel that is bound to worship the great Jehovah as the *God of Israel, the King of saints*, (Rev. xv. 3, 4.) but all the families of the earth are bound to worship him as *King of nations; for to him it appertains, to him it suits and agrees*. Note, There is an admirable decency and congruity in the worshipping of God only. It is fit that he who is *God alone*, should *alone* be served; that he who is *Lord of all*, should be served *by all*; that he who is great, should be *greatly feared, and greatly praised*.

(2.) His *verity* is as evident as the idol's *vanity*, v. 10. They are the work of men's hands, and therefore nothing is more plain than that it is a jest to worship them, if that may be called a *jest*, which is so great an indignity to him that made us; but the *Lord is the true God, the God of truth, he is God in truth. God Jehovah in truth*, he is not a Counterfeit, and Pretender, as they are, but is really what he has revealed himself to be; he is one we may depend upon, in whom, and by whom, we cannot be deceived. [1.] Look upon him as he is in himself, he is the *living God*; he is Life itself, has life in himself, and is the Fountain of life to all the creatures. The gods of the heathen are *dead things*, worthless and useless, but ours is a *living God*, and hath immortality. [2.] Look upon him with relation to his creatures, he is a *King*, and absolute Monarch over them all, is their Owner and Ruler, has an incontestable right both to command them and dispose of them; as a *King*, he protects the creatures, provides for their welfare, and preserves peace among them. He is an *everlasting King*. The *counsels* of his kingdom were from everlasting, and the *continuance* of it will be to everlasting. He is a *King of eternity*. The idols whom they call their *kings*, are but of yesterday,

and will soon be abolished: and the kings of the earth that set them up to be worshipped, will themselves be in the dust shortly; but *the Lord shall reign for ever, thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.*

(3.) None knows the power of his anger. Let us stand in awe, and not dare to provoke him by giving that glory to another which is due to him alone, for *at his wrath the earth shall tremble*, even the strongest and stoutest of the kings of the earth; nay, the earth, firmly as it is fixed, when he pleases, is made to quake, and the rocks to tremble, Ps. civ. 32. Hab. iii. 6, 10. Though the *nations* should join together to contend with him, and unite their force, yet they would be found utterly unable not only to resist, but even to abide, *his indignation*. They cannot only not make head against it, for it would overcome them, but they cannot bear up under it, for it would overwhelm them, Ps. lxxvi. 7, 8. Nahum i. 6.

(4.) He is the God of nature, the Fountain of all being; and all the powers of nature are at his command and disposal, v. 12, 13. The God we worship, is he that made the heavens and the earth, and has a sovereign dominion over both; so that his *invisible things* are manifested and proved in the things that are seen.

[1.] If we look back, we find that the whole world owed its original to him, as its first Cause. It was a common saying even among the *Greeks*—*He that sets up to be another god, ought first to make another world.* While the heathen worship gods that are made, we worship the God that made us and all things. First, The earth is a body of vast bulk, has valuable treasures in its bowels, and more valuable fruit on its surface. It and them he has made by his power; and it is by no less than an infinite power, that it hangs upon nothing, as it does, Job xxvi. 7. *Ponderibus librata suis—Poised by its own weight.* Secondly, The world, the habitable part of the earth, is admirably fitted for the use and service of man, and he hath established it so by his wisdom, so that it continues serviceable in constant changes, and yet a continual stability from one generation to another. Therefore both the *earth and the world* are his, Ps. xxiv. 1. Thirdly, The heavens are wonderfully stretched out to an incredible extent, and it is by his discretion that they are so, and that the motions of the heavenly bodies are directed for the benefit of this lower world. These declare his glory, (Ps. xix. 1.) and oblige us to declare it, and not give that glory to the heavens, which is due to him that made them.

[2.] If we look up, we see his providence to be a continued creation; (v. 13.) *When he uttereth his voice,* (gives the word of command,) *there is a multitude of waters in the heavens,* which are poured out on the earth, whether for judgment or mercy, as he intends them. When he utters his voice in the thunder, immediately there follow thunder-showers, in which there are a *multitude of waters*; and those come with a noise, as the margin reads it; and we read of the *noise of abundance of rain*, 1 Kings xviii. 41. Nay, there are wonders done daily in the kingdom of nature without noise; *He causes the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth*, from all parts of the earth, even the most remote, and chiefly those that lie next the sea. All the earth pays the tribute of vapours, because all the earth receives the blessing of rain. And thus the moisture in the universe, like the money in a kingdom, and the blood in the body, is continually circulating for the good of the whole. Those vapours produce wonders, for of them are formed *lightnings for the rain and the winds* which God from time to time brings forth out of his treasures, as there is occasion for them, directing them all in such measure and for such use as he thinks fit,

2. payments are made out of the treasury. All the meteors are so ready to serve God's purposes, that he seems to have treasures of them, that cannot be exhausted, and may at any time be drawn from, Ps. cxxxv. 7. God glories in the treasures he has of these, Job xxxviii. 22, 23. This God can do; but which of the idols of the heathen can do the like? Note, There is no sort of weather but what furnishes us with a proof and instance of the wisdom and power of the great Creator.

(5.) This God is Israel's God in covenant, and the felicity of every Israelite indeed. Therefore let the house of Israel cleave to him, and not forsake him to embrace idols; for, if they do, they certainly change for the worse, for (v. 16.) *the Portion of Jacob is not like them*; their rock is not as our Rock, (Deut. xxxii. 31.) nor ours like their mole-hills. Note, [1.] They that have the Lord for their God, have a full and complete happiness in him. The God of Jacob is the Portion of Jacob; he is his all, and in him he has enough, and needs no more in this world or the other. In him we have a *worthy portion*, Ps. xvi. 5. (2.) If we have entire satisfaction and complacency in God as our Portion, he will have a gracious delight in us as his people, whom he owns as *the rod of his inheritance*, his possession and treasure, with whom he dwells and by whom he is served and honoured. [3.] It is the unspeakable comfort of all the Lord's people, that he who is their God, is the *Former of all things*, and therefore is able to do all that for them, and give all that to them, which they stand in need of. Their help stands in his name *who made heaven and earth.* And he is the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts in heaven and earth, has them all at his command, and will command them into the service of his people when there is occasion. This is the name by which they know him, which they first give him the glory of, and then take to themselves the comfort of. [4.] Herein God's people are happy above all other people, happy indeed, *bona si sua norint—did they but know their blessedness.* The gods which the heathen pride, and please, and so portion themselves in, are vanity and a lie; but the Portion of Jacob is not like them.

3. The prophet, having thus compared the gods of the heathen with the God of Israel, (between whom there is no comparison,) reads the doom, the certain doom, of all those pretenders, and directs the Jews in God's name, to read it to the worshippers of idols, though they were their lords and masters; (v. 11.) *Thus shall ye say unto them, and the God ye serve will bear you out in saying it, The gods which have not made the heavens and the earth, and therefore are no gods, but usurpers of the honour due to him only who did make heaven and earth, those shall perish*; perish of course, because they are vanity; perish by his righteous sentence, because they are rivals with him, as gods they shall perish: *from off the earth*, even all those things on earth beneath, which they make gods of; and *from under these heavens*, even all those things in the firmament of heaven, under the highest heavens, which are deified, according to the distribution in the second commandment. These words in the original are not in the Hebrew, like all the rest, but in the Chaldean dialect, that the Jews in captivity might have this ready to say to the Chaldeans in their own language, when they tempted them to idolatry; "Do you press us to worship your gods? We will never do that; for," (1.) "They are counterfeited deities; they are no gods, for they have not made the heavens and the earth, and therefore are not entitled to our homage; nor are we indebted to them either for the products of the earth, or the influences of heaven, as we are to the God of Israel." The primitive Christians would say, when they were

urged to worship such a god, *Let him make a world, and he shall be my god.* While we have him to worship, who made heaven and earth, it is very absurd to worship any other. (2.) "They are *condemned* deities; they shall *perish*, the time shall come when they shall be no more respected as they are now, but shall be buried in oblivion, and they and their worshippers shall sink together; the earth shall no longer *bear* them, the heavens shall no longer *cover* them, but both shall *abandon* them." It is repeated, *v. 15. In the time of their visitation.* When God comes to reckon with idolaters, he shall make them weary of their idols, and glad to be rid of them; they shall *cast them to the moles and to the bats*, Isa. ii. 20. Whatever runs against God and religion, will be run down at last.

17. Gather up thy wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress: 18. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once, and will distress them, that they may find it so. 19. Wo is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it. 29. My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not; *there is none* to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains. 21. For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered. 22. Behold, the noise of the bruit is come, and a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons. 23. O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: *it is not in man* that walketh to direct his steps. 24. O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing. 25. Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate.

In these verses,

I. The prophet threatens, in God's name, the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, *v. 17, 18.* The Jews that continued in their own land, after some were carried into captivity, were very secure; they thought themselves *inhabitants of a fortress*, their country was their *strong hold*, and, in their own conceit, impregnable; but they are here bid to think of leaving it: they must prepare to go after their brethren, and pack up their effects in expectation of it; "*Gather up thy wares out of the land; contract your affairs, and bring them into as little a compass as you can. Arise, depart, this is not your rest*, Mic. ii. 10. Let not what you have lie scattered, for the Chaldeans will be upon you again, to be the executioners of the sentence God has passed upon you, (*v. 18.*) *Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once:* they have hitherto *dropped* out, by a few at a time, but one captivity more shall make a thorough riddance, and they shall be *slung* out as a stone out of a sling, so easily, so thoroughly shall they be cast out; nothing of them shall remain, they shall be thrown out with vio-

lence, and driven to a place at a great distance off, in a little time." See this comparison used to signify an utter destruction, 1 Sam. xxv. 29. *Yet once more*, God will shake their land, and *shake the wicked out of it*, Heb. xii. 26. He adds, *And I will distress them, that they may find it so.* He will not only throw them out hence, (that he may do, and yet they may be easy elsewhere,) but, whithersoever they go, trouble shall follow them; they shall be continually perplexed and straitened, and at a loss within themselves; and who or what can make those easy whom God *will distress*, whom he will distress, *that they may find it so*, that they may *feel* that which they would not *believe*? They were often told of the weight of God's wrath, and their utter inability to make head against it, or bear up under it: they were told that their sin would be their ruin, and they would not regard or credit what was told them; but now *they shall find it so; and therefore* God will pursue them with his judgments, *that they may find it so*, and be forced to acknowledge it. Note, Sooner or later, sinners will find it just so as the word of God has represented things to them, and no better, and that the threatenings were not bugbears.

II. He brings in the people sadly lamenting their calamities; (*v. 19.*) *Wo is me for my hurt!* Some make this the prophet's own lamentation, not for himself, but for the calamities and desolations of his country. He mourned for those that would not be persuaded to mourn for themselves; and since there were none that had so much sense as to join with them, he *weeps in secret*, and cries out, *Wo is me!* In mournful times, it becomes us to be of a mournful spirit. But it may be taken as the language of the people, considered as a body, and therefore speaking as a single person. The prophet puts into their mouths the words *they should say*; whether they would say them or no, they should have cause to say them. Some among them would thus bemoan themselves, and all of them, at last, would be forced to do it.

1. They lament that the affliction is very great, and that it is very hard to them to bear it; the more hard because they had not been used to trouble, and now did not expect it; "*Wo is me for my hurt*, not for what I *fear*, but for what I *feel*;" for they are not, as some are, *worse frightened than hurt*. Nor is it a slight hurt, but a *wound*, a wound that is *grievous*, very painful, and very threatening.

2. That there is no remedy but patience; they cannot help themselves, but must sit still, and abide it. *But I said*, when I was about to complain of my wound, To what purpose is it to complain? *This is a grief, and I must bear it* as well as I can. This is the language rather of a *sullen* than of a *gracious* submission; of a patience *per force*, not a patience *by principle*. When I am in affliction, I should say, "This is an evil, and *I will bear it*, because it is the will of God that I should, because his wisdom has appointed this for me, and his grace will make it work for good to me." This is *receiving evil* at the hand of God, Job ii. 10. But to say, "This is an evil, and *I must bear it*, because I cannot help it," is but a brutal patience, and argues a want of those good thoughts of God, which we should always have, even under our afflictions; saying, not only, God can and will do what he pleases, but, *Let him do what he pleases*.

3. That the country was quite ruined and wasted; (*v. 20.*) *My tabernacle is spoiled.* Jerusalem, though a strong city, now proves as weak and moveable as a tabernacle: their government is dissolved, and their state fallen to pieces, like a tabernacle or tent, when it is taken down, and *all its cords*, that should keep it together, *are broken*. Or, by the tabernacle here may be meant the temple, the sanctuary,

which at first was but a tabernacle, and is now called so, as then it was sometimes called a *temple*. Their church is ruined, and all the supports of it fail. It was a general destruction of church and state, city and country, and there were none to repair these desolations; "*My children are gone forth of me; some are fled, others slain, others carried into captivity, so that as to me they are not; I am likely to be an outcast, and to perish for want of shelter; for there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, none of my children that used to do it for me, none to set up my curtains, none to do me any service.*" *Jerusalem has none to guide her of all her sons*, Isa. li. 18.

4. That the rulers took no care, nor any proper measures, for the redress of their grievances, and the re-establishing of their ruined state; (v. 21.) *The pastors are become brutish*. When the *tents*, the shepherds' tents, were *spoiled*, (v. 20.) it concerned the *shepherds* to look after them; but they were *foolish shepherds*. Their kings and princes had no regard at all to the public welfare, seemed to have no sense of the desolations of the land, but were quite besotted and infatuated. The priests, the pastors of God's tabernacle, did a great deal towards the ruin of religion, but nothing toward the repair of it. They are *brutish* indeed, for *they have not sought the Lord*; they have neither made their peace with him nor their prayer to him; they had no eye to him and his providence, in their management of affairs; they neither acknowledged the judgment, nor expected the deliverance, to come from his hand. Note, Those are brutish people, that do not seek the Lord, that live without prayer, and live without God in the world; every man is either a *saint* or a *brute*. But it is sad indeed with a people, when their pastors, that should feed them *with knowledge and understanding*, are themselves thus brutish. And what comes of it? *Therefore they shall not prosper*; none of their attempts for the public safety shall succeed. Note, Those cannot expect to prosper, who do not by faith and prayer take God along with them in all their ways. And when the *pastors are brutish*, what else can be expected but that *all their flocks* should be *scattered*? *For if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch*. The ruin of a people is often owing to the *brutishness* of their *pastors*.

5. That the report of the enemy's approach was very dreadful; (v. 22.) *The noise of the bruit is come*, of the report which at first was but whispered and bruited abroad, as waiting confirmation. It now proves too true; *A great commotion arises out of the north country*, which threatens to make all the cities of Judah *desolate*, and a *den of dragons*; for they must all expect to be sacrificed to the avarice and fury of the Chaldean army. And what else can that place expect, but to be made a *den of dragons*, which has by sin made itself a *den of thieves*?

III. He turns to God, and addresses himself to him, finding it to little purpose to speak to the people. It is some comfort to poor ministers, that, if men will not hear them, God will; and to him they have liberty of access at all times. Let them close their preaching with prayer, as the prophet, and then they shall have no reason to say that they have laboured in vain.

1. The prophet here acknowledges the sovereignty and dominion of the divine providence, that by it, and not by their own will and wisdom, the affairs both of nations and particular persons are directed and determined, v. 23. This is an article of our faith, which it is very proper for us to make confession of at the throne of grace, when we are complaining of an affliction, or suing for a mercy; "*O Lord, I know, and believe, that the way of*

man is not in himself; Nebuchadnezzar did not come of himself against our land, but by the direction of a divine providence." We cannot of ourselves do any thing for our own relief, unless God work with us, and command deliverance for us, for it is *not in man that walketh, to direct his steps*, though he seem in his walking to be perfectly at liberty, and to choose his own way. These that had promised themselves a long enjoyment of their estates and possessions, were made to know by sad experience, when they were thrown out by the Chaldeans, that *the way of man is not in himself*; the designs which men lay deep, and think well formed, are dashed to pieces in a moment. We must all apply this to ourselves, and mix faith with it, that we are not at our own disposal, but under a divine direction; the event is often overruled, so as to be quite contrary to our intention and expectation. We are not masters of our own way, nor can we think that every thing should be *according to our mind*; we must therefore refer ourselves to God and acquiesce in his will. Some think that the prophet mentions this, here, with a design to make this comfortable use of it, that the way of the Chaldean army being not in themselves, they can do no more than God permits them; he can set bounds to these proud waves, and say, *Hitherto they shall come, and no further*. And a quieting consideration it is, that the most formidable enemies have *no power against us but what is given them from above*.

2. He deprecates the divine wrath, that it might not fall upon God's Israel, v. 24. He speaks not for himself only, but on the behalf of his people; *O Lord, correct me, but with judgment*, in measure and with moderation, and in wisdom, no more than is necessary for the driving out of the foolishness that is bound up in our hearts: *not in thine anger*; how severe soever the correction be, let it come from thy love, and be designed for our good, and made to work for good; not to *bring us to nothing*, but to bring us home to thyself. Let it not be according to the desert of our sins, but according to the designs of thy grace. Note, (1.) We cannot pray in faith that we may never be corrected, while we are conscious to ourselves that we need it and deserve it, and know that as many as God loves, he chastens. (2.) The great thing we should dread in affliction, is, the wrath of God. Say not, *Lord, do not correct me*, but, *Lord, do not correct me in anger*; for that will infuse wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery; that will *bring us to nothing*; we may bear the smart of his rod, but we cannot bear the weight of his wrath.

3. He imprecates the divine wrath against the oppressors and persecutors of Israel; (v. 25.) *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not*. This prayer does not come from a spirit of malice or revenge, nor is it intended to prescribe to God whom he should execute his judgments upon, or in what order; but, (1.) It is an appeal to his justice; "*Lord, we are a provoking people; but are there not other nations that are more so? And shall we only be punished? We are thy children, and may expect a fatherly correction; but they are thine enemies, and against them we have reason to think thine indignation should be, not against us.*" This is God's usual method. *The cup put into the hands of God's people is full of mixtures*, mixtures of mercy; but the *drugs of the cup* are reserved for the *wicked of the earth*, let them *swallow them out*, Ps. lxxv. 8. (2.) It is a prediction of God's judgments upon all the impenitent enemies of his church and kingdom. *If judgment begin thus at the house of God, what shall be the end of those that obey not his gospel?* 1 Pet. iv. 17. See how the *heathen* are described, on whom God's *fury* shall be *poured*

ed out. [1.] They are *strangers* to God, and are content to be so. They *know him not*, nor desire to know him. They are *families* that live without prayer, that have nothing of religion among them; they *call not on God's name*. Those that *restrain prayer*, prove that they *know not God*; for they that know him will seek to him, and entreat his favour. [2.] They are persecutors of the people of God, and are resolved to be so. They have *eaten up Jacob*, with as much greediness, as those that are hungry eat their necessary food; nay, with more, for they never know when they have enough; they have *devoured him and consumed him*, and *made his habitation desolate*, that is, the land in which he lives, or the temple of God, which is his habitation among them. Note, What the heathen, in their rage and malice, do against the people of God, though therein he makes use of them as the instruments of his correction, yet he will, for that, make them the objects of his indignation. This prayer is taken from Ps. lxxix. 6, 7.

· CHAP. XI.

In this chapter, I. God by the prophet puts the people in mind of the covenant he had made with their fathers, and how much he had insisted upon it, as the condition of the covenant, that they should be obedient to him, v. 1..7. II. He charges it upon them, that they, in succession to their fathers, and in confederacy among themselves, had obstinately refused to obey him, v. 8..10. III. He threatens to punish them with utter ruin for their disobedience, especially for their idolatry; (v. 11, 13.) and tells them, that their idols should not save them, (v. 12.) that their prophets should not pray for them; (v. 14.) he also justifies his proceedings therein, they having brought all this mischief upon themselves by their own folly and willfulness, v. 15..17. IV. Here is an account of a conspiracy formed against Jeremiah by his fellow-citizens, the men of Anathoth; God's discovery of it to him; (v. 18, 19.) his prayer against them, (v. 20.) and a prediction of God's judgments upon them for it, v. 21..23.

I. **T**HE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2. Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; 3. And say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant, 4. Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God; 5. That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O LORD. 6. Then the LORD said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them. 7. For I earnestly protested unto your fathers, in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. 8. Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all

the words of this covenant which I commanded them to do: but they did them not. 9. And the LORD said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 10. They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant, which I made with their fathers.

The prophet here, as prosecutor in God's name, draws up an indictment against the Jews, for wilful disobedience to the commands of their rightful Sovereign. For the more solemn management of this charge,

I. He produces the commission he had to draw up the charge against them; he did not take pleasure in accusing the children of his people, but God commanded him to *speak it to the men of Judah*, v. 1, 2. In the original it is plural; *Speak ye this*. For what he said to Jeremiah, was the same that he gave in charge to all his servants the prophets. They none of them said any other than what Moses, in the law, had said; to that therefore they must refer themselves, and direct the people; "*Hear the words of this covenant*"; turn to your Bibles, be judged by them." Jeremiah must now *proclaim this* in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, that all may hear, for all are concerned. All the words of reproof and conviction, which the prophets spake, were grounded upon the *words of the covenant*, and agreed with that; "And therefore *hear these words*, and understand by them upon what terms you stood with God at first; and then, by comparing yourselves with the covenant, you will soon be aware upon what terms you now stand with him."

II. He opens the charter upon which their state was founded, and by which they held their privileges. They had forgotten the tenure of it, and lived as if they thought that the grant was absolute, and that they might do what they pleased, and yet have what God had promised; or as if they thought that the keeping up of the ceremonial observances was all that God required of them. He therefore shows them, with all possible plainness, that the thing God insisted upon was, *obedience*, that was *better than sacrifice*. He said, *Obey my voice*; (v. 4.) and again, (v. 7.) "*Obey my voice*; own God for your Master, give up yourselves to him as his subjects and servants; attend to all the declarations of his mind and will, and make conscience of complying with them. *Do my commandments*, not only in some things, but according to all which I command you; make conscience of moral duties especially, and rest not in those that are merely ritual; *hear the words of the covenant, and do them*."

1. This was the original contract between God and them, when he first formed them into a people. It was what he *commanded their fathers*, when he first brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, (v. 4.) and again, v. 7. He never intended to take them under his guidance and protection upon any other terms. This was it that he required from them, in gratitude for the great things he did for them when he brought them from the iron furnace. Therefore he redeemed them out of the service of the Egyptians, which was perfect slavery, that he might take them into his own service, which is perfect freedom, Luke i. 74, 75.

2. This was not only laid before them then, but it was with the greatest impertunity imaginable pressed upon them, v. 7. God not only commanded

it, but *earnestly protested* it, to their fathers, when he brought them into covenant with himself. Moses inculcated it again and again, by precept upon precept, and line upon line.

3. This was made the condition of the relation between them and God, which was so much their honour and privilege; "*So shall ye be my people, and I will be your God; I will own you for mine, and you may call upon me as yours;*" which intimates that if they refused to obey, they could no longer claim the benefit of the relation.

4. It was upon these terms that the land of Canaan was given them for a possession; *Obey my voice, that I may perform the oath sworn to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, v. 5.* God was ready to fulfil the promise, but then they must fulfil the condition; if not, the promise is void, and it is just with God to turn them out of possession. Being brought in upon their good behaviour, they had no wrong done them if they were turned out upon their ill behaviour. *Obedience* was the rent reserved by the lease, with a power to re-enter for non-payment.

5. This obedience was not only made a condition of the blessing, but was required under the penalty of a curse. This is mentioned first here, (v. 3.) that they might, if possible, be awakened by the terrors of the Lord; *Cursed be the man, though it were but a single person, that obeys not the words of this covenant*, much more when it is the body of the nation, that rebels. There are curses of the covenant as well as blessings; and Moses set before them not only *life and good*, but *death and evil*; (Deut. xxx. 15.) so that they had fair warning given them of the fatal consequences of disobedience.

6. Lest this covenant should be forgotten, and, because *out of mind*, should be thought *out of date*, God had from time to time called to them to remember it, and by his servants the prophets had made a continual *claim* of this rent; so that they could not plead, in excuse of their non-payment, that it had never been demanded; from the day he brought them out of Egypt to this day, (and that was near one thousand years,) he had been, in one way or other, at *sundry times and in divers manners*, protesting to them the necessity of obedience. God keeps an account how long we have enjoyed the means of grace; and how powerful those means have been; how often we have been not only spoken to, but *protested to*, concerning our duty.

7. This covenant was consented to; (v. 5.) *Then answered I, and said, Amen, so be it, O Lord.* These are the words of the prophet, expressing either, (1.) His own consent to the covenant *for himself*, and his desire to have the benefit of it. God promised Canaan to the obedient; "Lord," says he, "I take thee at thy word, I will be obedient; let me have mine inheritance in the land of promise, of which Canaan is a type." Or, (2.) His good will, and good wish, that his people might have the benefit of it; "*Amen*; Lord, let them still be kept in possession of this good land, and not turned out of it; make good the promise to them." Or, (3.) His people's consent to the covenant; "Then answered I, in the name of the people, *So be it.*" Taking it in this sense, it refers to the declared consent which the people gave to the covenant, not only to the precepts of it, when they said, *All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do, and will be obedient*, but to the penalties, when they said *Amen* to all the curses upon mount Ebal. The more solemnly we have engaged ourselves to God, the more reason we have to hope that it will be perpetual; and yet here it did not prove so.

III. He charges them with breach of covenant, such a breach as amounted to a forfeiture of their charter, v. 8. God had said again and again, by

his law and by his prophets, "*Obe, my voice, do as you are bidden, and all shall be well;*" yet they *obeyed not*; and because they were resolved not to submit their souls to God's commandments, they would not so much as *incline their ears* to them, but got as far as they could out of call; *They waived every one in the imagination of their evil heart*, followed their own inventions; every man did as his fancy and humour led him, right or wrong, lawful or unlawful, both in their devotions and in their conversations; see ch. vii. 24. What then can they expect, but to fall under the curse of the covenant, since they would not comply with the commands and conditions of it; *Therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant*, all the threatenings contained in it, because *they did not what they were commanded*. Note, The words of the covenant shall not fall to the ground. If we do not by our obedience qualify ourselves for the blessings of it, we shall by our disobedience bring ourselves under the curses of it.

That which aggravated their defection from God, and rebellion against him, was, that it was general, and as it were by *consent*, v. 9, 10. Jeremiah himself saw that many lived in open disobedience to God, but the Lord told him that the matter was worse than he thought of; *A conspiracy is found among them*, by him whose eye is upon the hidden works of darkness. There is a combination against God and religion, a dangerous design formed to overthrow God's government, and bring in the pretenders, the counterfeit deities. This intimates that they were *wilful and deliberate* in wickedness; they rebelled against God, not through incogitancy, but presumptuously, and with a high hand; that they were *subtle and ingenious* in wickedness, and carried on their plot against religion with a great deal of art and management; that they were *linked together* in the design, and, as is usual among conspirators, engaged to stand by one another in it, and to live and die together; they were resolved to go through with it. A cursed conspiracy! O that there were not the like in our day! Observe, 1. What the conspiracy was; they designed to overthrow divine revelation, and set that aside, and persuade people not to *hear*, not to *heed*, the words of God. They did all they could to derogate from the authority of the scriptures, and to lessen the value of them; they designed to draw people *after other gods to serve them*, to consult them as their oracles, and make court to them as their benefactors. Human reason shall be their god, a light within their god, an infallible judge their god, saints and angels their gods, the god of this or the other nation shall be theirs; thus, under several disguises, they are in the same confederacy *against the Lord and against his anointed*. 2. Who were in the conspiracy; one would have expected to find some foreigners ring-leaders in it. No, (1.) The inhabitants of Jerusalem are in conspiracy with the men of Judah; city and country agree in this, however they may differ in other things. (2.) Those of this generation seem to be in conspiracy with those of the foregoing generation, to carry on the war from age to age against religion; *They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers*, and are risen up in their stead, *a seed of evil-doers, an increase of sinful men*, Num. xxxii. 14. In Josiah's time there had been a reformation, but after his death they returned to the idolatries which then they had renounced. (3.) Judah and Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes and the two that were often at daggers-drawing one with another, were yet in a conspiracy to break the covenant God had made with their fathers, even with the heads of all the twelve tribes. The house of Israel began the revolt, but the house of Judah soon came into the conspiracy. Now what else could

be expected, but that God should take severe methods, both for the chastising of these conspirators, and the crushing of this conspiracy; for none ever hardened his heart thus against God, and prospered. He that rolls this stone, it will return upon him.

11. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them. 12. Then shall the cities of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, go and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not save them at all in the time of their trouble. 13. For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal. 14. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble. 15. What hath my beloved to do in my house, seeing she hath wrought lewdness with many, and the holy flesh is passed from thee? when thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest. 16. The Lord called thy name, A green olive-tree, fair, and of goodly fruit; with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken. 17. For the Lord of hosts that planted thee hath pronounced evil against thee, for the evil of the house of Israel, and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves, to provoke me to anger, in offering incense unto Baal.

This paragraph, which contains so much of God's wrath, might very well be expected to follow upon that which goes next before, which contained so much of his people's sin. When God found so much evil among them, we cannot think it strange if it follows, *Therefore I will bring evil upon them*, (v. 11.) the evil of punishment for the evil of sin; and there is no remedy, no relief, the decree is gone forth, and the sentence will be executed.

1. They cannot help themselves, but will be found too weak to contest with God's judgment; it is evil which they shall not be able to escape, or to go forth out of, by any evasion whatsoever. Note, Those that will not submit to God's government, shall not be able to escape his wrath. There is no fleeing from his justice, no avoiding his cognizance. Evil pursues sinners, and entangles them in snares out of which they cannot extricate themselves.

2. Their God will not help them, his providence shall no way favour them; *Though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them*. In their affliction they will seek the God whom before they slighted, and cry to him whom before they would not vouchsafe to speak to. But how can they expect to speed? For he has plainly told us, that he that turns away his ears from hearing the law, as they did, (v. 8. for they inclined not their ear,) even his prayer shall be an abomination to him, as the word of the Lord was now to them a reproach.

3. Their idols shall not help them, v. 12. They

shall go and cry to the gods to whom they now offer incense, and put them in mind of the costly services wherewith they had honoured them, expecting they should now have relief from them, but in vain: they shall be sent to the gods whom they served; (Judg. x. 4. Deut. xxxii. 37, 38.) and what the better? *They shall not save them at all*, shall do nothing toward their salvation, nor give them any prospect of it; they shall not afford them the least comfort or relief, or mitigation of their trouble. It is God only that is a Friend at need, a present powerful Help in time of trouble. The idols cannot help themselves; how then shall they help their worshippers? Those that make idols of the world and the flesh, will in vain have recourse to them in a day of distress. If the idols could have done any real kindness to their worshippers, they would have done it for this people, who had renounced the true God to embrace them, had multiplied them according to the number of their cities; (v. 13.) nay, in Jerusalem, according to the number of their streets; suspecting both their sufficiency and their readiness to help them, they must have many, lest a few would not serve; they must have them dispersed in every corner, lest they should be out of the way when they had occasion for them. In Jerusalem, the city which God had chosen to put his name there, publicly in the streets of Jerusalem, in every street, they had altars to that shameful thing, that shame, even to Baal, which they ought to have been ashamed of, with which they did reproach the Lord, and bring confusion upon themselves. But now in their distress, their many gods, and many altars, should stand them in no stead. Note, Those that will not be ashamed of their commission of sin as a wicked thing, will be ashamed of their expectations from sin as a fruitless thing.

4. Jeremiah's prayer shall not help them; (v. 14.) what God had said to him before, (ch. vii. 16.) he here says again, *Pray not thou for this people*. This is not designed for a command to the prophet, so much as for a threatening to the people, that they should have no benefit by the prayers of their friends for them. God would give no encouragement to the prophets to pray for them, would not stir up the Spirit of prayer, but cast a damp upon it; would put it into their hearts to pray, not for the body of the people, but for the remnant among them, to pray for their eternal salvation, not for their deliverance from the temporal judgments that were coming upon them: and what other prayers were put up for them, should not be heard. Those are in a sad case indeed, that are cut off from the benefit of prayer. *"I will not hear them when they cry, and therefore do not thou pray for them."* Note, Those that have so far thrown themselves out of God's favour, that he will not hear their prayers, cannot expect benefit by the prayers of others for them.

5. The profession they make of religion shall stand them in no stead, v. 15. They were originally God's beloved, his spouse, he was married to them by the covenant of peculiarity; even the unbelieving Jews are said to be beloved for the fathers' sakes, Rom. xi. 28. As such, they had a place in God's house, they were admitted to worship in the courts of his temple, they partook of God's altar, they ate of the flesh of their peace-offerings, here called the holy flesh, which God had the honour of, and they had the comfort of. This they gloried in, and trusted to. What harm could come to those who were God's beloved, who were under the protection of his house? Even when they did evil, yet they rejoiced and gloried in this, made a mighty noise of this. And when their evil was, (so the margin reads it,) when trouble came upon them, they rejoiced in this, and made this their confidence; but their confidence would deceive them, for God has rejected it,

they themselves have forfeited the privileges they so much boasted of. They have wrought lewdness with many, have been guilty of spiritual whoredom, have worshipped many idols. And therefore, (1.) God's temple will *yield them no protection*; it is fit that the adulteress, especially when she has so often repeated her whoredoms, and is grown so impudent in them, and irreclaimable, should be *put away*, and turned out of doors; "*What has my beloved to do in my house?*" She is a scandal to it, and therefore it shall no longer be a shelter to her." (2.) God's altar will *yield them no satisfaction*, nor can they expect any comfort from that; *The holy flesh is passed from thee*, an end will soon be put to thy sacrifices, when the temple shall be laid in ruins; and where then will the holy flesh be that thou art so proud of?" A holy heart will be a comfort to us when the *holy flesh is passed from us*; an inward principle of grace will make up the want of the outward means of grace. But woe unto us if the departure of the *holy flesh* be accompanied with the departure of the *Holy Spirit*.

6. God's former favours to them shall stand them in no stead, v. 16, 17. Their remembrance of them shall be no comfort to them under their troubles, and God's remembrance of them shall be no argument for their relief. (1.) It is true, God had done *great things for them*; that people had been favourites above any people under the sun, they had been the darlings of heaven, God had called Israel's name *a green olive-tree*, and had made them so, for he miscalls nothing; he had *planted* them, (v. 17.) had formed them into a people, with all the advantages they could have to make them a fruitful and flourishing people, so good was their law, and so good was their land. One would think no other, than that a people so planted, so watered, so cultivated, should be, as the *olive-tree* is, *ever green*, in respect both of piety and prosperity, Ps. lii. 8. God called them *fair*, and of *goodly fruit*; both *good for food*, and *pleasant to the eye*; both amiable and serviceable to God and man, for with the *greenness* and *fatness* of the olive both are honoured, Judg. ix. 9. (2.) It is as true, that they have done *evil things against God*; he had planted them a green olive, a good olive, but they were degenerated into a *wild olive*, Rom. xi. 17. Both *the house of Israel* and *the house of Judah* had done evil, had provoked God to anger in burning incense unto Baal, setting up other mediators between them and the supreme God beside the promised Messiah; nay, setting up other gods in competition with the true and living God, for they had *gods* many, as well as *lords* many. (3.) When they have conducted themselves so ill, they can expect no other than that, notwithstanding what good he has done to them, and designed for them, he should now bring upon them the evil he has pronounced against them. He that made them will not save them. He that planted this *green olive-tree*, and expected fruit from it, finding it barren and grown wild, has *kindled fire upon it*, to burn it as it stands; for, being without fruit, it is twice dead, plucked up by the roots, (Jude 12.) it is cut down, and cast into the fire, the fittest place for trees that cumber the ground, Matth. iii. 10. The *branches of it*, the high and lofty boughs, (so the word signifies,) are broken, are broken down, both princes and priests cut off. And thus it proves, that the evil done against God, to provoke him to anger, is really done against themselves, they *wrong their own souls*; God is out of their reach, but they ruin themselves. See ch. vii. 19. Note, Every sin against God is a sin against ourselves, and so it will be found sooner or later.

13. And the LORD hath given me knowledge of it, and I know it, then thou shew-

edst me their doings. 19. But I was like a lamb, or an ox, that is brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered. 20. But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I revealed my cause. 21. Therefore thus saith the LORD of the men of Anathoth that seek thy life, saying, Prophecy not in the name of the LORD, that thou die not by our hand: 22. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will punish them; the young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine; 23. And there shall be no remnant of them, for I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth, even the year of their visitation.

The prophet Jeremiah has much in his writings concerning himself, much more than Isaiah had, the times he lived in being very troublesome. Here we have (as it should seem) the beginning of his sorrows, which arose from those of his own city, Anathoth, a priest's city, and yet a malignant one. Observe here,

1. Their plot against him, v. 19. They devised devices against him, laid their heads together to contrive how they might be in the most plausible and effectual manner the death of him. Malice is ingenious in its devices, as well as industrious in its prosecutions. They said concerning Jeremiah, *Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof*; a proverbial expression; "Let us utterly destroy him, root and branch. Let us destroy both the father and the family;" (as, when Naboth was put to death for treason, his sons were put to death with him;) or, rather, "Both the prophet and the prophecy; let us kill the one, and defeat the other. Let us cut him off from the land of the living, as a false prophet, and load him with ignominy and disgrace, that his name may be no more remembered with respect. Let us sink his reputation, and so spoil the credit of his predictions." This was their plot; and, (1.) It was a barbarous one; but so cruel have the persecutors of God's prophets been. They hunt for no less than the precious life, and very precious the lives are, that they hunt for. But (2.) It was a baffled one. They thought to put an end to his days, but he survived most of his enemies; they thought to blast his memory, but it lives to this day, and will be blessed while time lasts.

2. The information which God gave him of this conspiracy against him. He knew nothing of it himself, so artfully had they concealed it; he came to Anathoth, meaning no harm to them, and therefore fearing no harm from them, like a lamb or an ox, that thinks he is driven as usual to the field, when he is brought to the slaughter; so little did poor Jeremiah dream of the design his citizens that hated him had upon him. None of his friends could, and none of his enemies would, give him any notice of his danger, that he might shift for his own safety; as Paul's sister's son gave him intelligence of the Jews that were lying in wait for him. There is but a step between Jeremiah and death; but then the Lord gave him knowledge of it, by dream or vision.

or impression upon his spirit, that he might save himself, as the king of Israel did upon the notice Elisha gave him, 2 Kings vi. 10. Thus he came to *know it*, God *shows him their doings*; and such were their devices, that the discovering of them was the defeating of them. If God had not let him know his own danger, it would have been improved by unreasonable men against the reputation of his predictions, that he who foretold the ruin of his country, could not foresee his own peril and avoid it. See what care God takes of his prophets; he *suffers no man to do them wrong*; all the rage of their enemies cannot prevail to take them off till they have finished their testimony. God knows all the secret designs of his and his people's enemies, and can, when he pleases, make them known; *A bird of the air shall carry the voice*.

3. His appeal to God hereupon, v. 20. His eye is to God as the *Lord of hosts that judges righteously*. It is matter of comfort to us, when men deal unjustly with us, that we have a God to go to, who does and will plead the cause of injured innocency, and appear against the injurious. God's justice, which is a terror to the wicked, is a comfort to the godly. His eye is to him, as the God that *tries the reins and the heart*; that perfectly sees what is in him; what are his thoughts and intents. He knew the integrity that was in Jeremiah's heart, and that he was not the man they represented him to be. He knew the wickedness that was in their hearts, though ever so cunningly concealed and disguised. Now, (1.) He prays judgment against them; "*Let me see thy vengeance on them*, do justice between me and them in such a way as thou pleasest." Some think there was something of human frailty in this prayer; at least, Christ has taught us another lesson, both by precept and by pattern, which is, to pray for our persecutors. Others think it comes from a pure zeal for the glory of God, and a pious prophetic indignation against men that were, by profession, priests, the Lord's ministers, and yet were so desperately wicked as to fly out against one that did them no harm, merely for the service he did to God. This petition was a prediction that he should see *God's vengeance* on them. (2.) He refers himself entirely to the judgment of God; "*Unto thee have I revealed my cause*; to thee I have committed it, not desiring or expecting to interest any other in it." Note, It is our comfort, when we are wronged, that we have a God to commit our cause to; and our duty to commit it to him, with a resolution to acquiesce in his definitive sentence; to subscribe, and not prescribe, to him.

4. Judgment given against his persecutors, the *men of Anathoth*. It was to no purpose for him to appeal to the courts of Jerusalem, he could not have right done him there, the priests there would stand by the priests at Anathoth, and rather second them than discontinue them; but God will *therefore* take cognizance of the cause himself, and we are sure that *his judgment is according to truth*.

Here is, (1.) Their crime recited, on which the sentence is grounded, v. 21. They *sought the prophet's life*, for they forbid him to *prophesy* upon pain of death; they were resolved either to *silence* him or to *slay* him. The provocation he gave them, was, his *prophesying in the name of the Lord*, without license from them that were the governors of the city, which he was a member of; and not prophesying such smooth things as they always bespoke. Their forbidding him to prophesy, was, in effect, *seeking his life*; for it was seeking to defeat the end and business of his life, and to rob him of the comfort of it. It is as bad to God's faithful ministers to have their *mouth* stopped, as to have their *breath* stopped. But especially when it was resolved, that, if he did prophesy, as certainly he would, notwith-

standing their inhibition, he should *die by their hand*; they would be accusers, judges, executioners, and all. It used to be said, that *a prophet could not perish but at Jerusalem*, for there the great council sat; but so bitter were the men of Anathoth against Jeremiah, that they would undertake to be the death of him themselves. A prophet then shall find not only *no honour*, but no favour, in his own country.

(2.) The sentence passed upon them for this crime, v. 22, 23. God says, *I will punish them*; let me alone to deal with them, *I will visit this upon them*; so the word is: God will inquire into it, and reckon for it. Two of God's four sore judgments shall serve to ruin their town. The *sword* shall devour their *young men*, though they were young priests, not men of war; their character shall not be their protection; and *famine* shall destroy the children, *sons and daughters*, that tarry at home; which is a more grievous death than that by the *sword*, Lam. iv. 9. The destruction shall be final, (v. 23.) *There shall be no remnant of them left*, none to be the seed of another generation; they sought Jeremiah's life, and therefore they shall *die*; they would destroy him, *root and branch*, that *his name might be no more remembered*, and therefore there shall be *no remnant of them*: and herein *the Lord is righteous*. Thus *evil is brought upon them*, even the *year of their visitation*; and that is evil enough, a recompense according to their deserts. Then shall Jeremiah *see his desire upon his enemies*. Note, Their condition is sad, who have the prayers of good ministers and good people against them.

CHAP. XII.

In this chapter, we have. I. The prophet's humble complaint to God of the success that wicked people had in their wicked practices, (v. 1, 2.) and his appeal to God concerning his own integrity, (v. 3.) with a prayer that God would, for the sake of the public, bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end, v. 3, 4. II. God's rebuke to the prophet for his uneasiness at his present troubles, bidding him prepare for greater, v. 5, 6. III. A sad lamentation of the present deplorable state of the Israel of God, v. 7.. 13. IV. An intimation of mercy to God's people, in a denunciation of wrath against their neighbours that helped forward their affliction, that they should be plucked out; but with a promise, that if they would at last join themselves with the people of God, they should come in sharers with them in their privileges, v. 14.. 17.

1. **R**IGHTEOUS art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of *thy judgments*: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? *wherefore* are all they happy that deal very treacherously? 2. Thou hast planted them; yea, they have taken root: they grow; yea, they bring forth fruit: thou *art* near in their mouth, and far from their reins. 3. But thou, O LORD, knowest me; thou hast seen me, and tried my heart toward thee; pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter. 4. How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end. 5. If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and *if* in the land of peace, *wherein* thou trustedst, *they wearied*

there, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan! 6. For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.

The prophet doubts not but it would be of use to others, to know what had passed between God and his soul; what temptations he had been assaulted with, and how he had got over them; and therefore he here tells us,

I. What liberty he humbly took, and was graciously allowed him, to reason with God concerning his judgment, *v. 1.* He is about to *plead with God*, not to quarrel with him, or find fault with his proceedings, but to inquire into the meaning of them, that he might more and more see reason to be satisfied in them, and might have wherewith to answer both his own and others' objections against them. The works of the Lord, and the reasons of them, are *sought out* even of those that have *pleasure therein*, Ps. cxi. 2. We may not *strive with our Maker*, but we may *reason* with him. The prophet lays down a truth of unquestionable certainty, which he resolves to abide by in managing this argument; *Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee.* Thus he arms himself against the temptation wherewith he was assaulted, to envy the prosperity of the wicked, before he entered into a parley with it. Note, When we are most in the dark concerning the meaning of God's dispensations, we must still resolve to keep up right thoughts of God, and must be confident of this, that he never did, nor ever will do, the least wrong to any of his creatures; even when his judgments are *unsearchable* as a *great deep*, and altogether unaccountable, yet his *righteousness* is as conspicuous and unmoveable as the *great mountains*, Ps. xxxvi. 6. Though sometimes *clouds and darkness are round about him*, yet *justice and judgment* are always the *habitation of his throne*, Ps. xcvi. 2. When we find it hard to understand particular providences, we must have recourse to general truths as our first principles, and abide by them: however it be, *the Lord is righteous*; see Ps. lxxiii. 1. And we must acknowledge it to him, as the prophet here, even when we *plead with him*, as those that have no thoughts of contending, but of learning, being fully assured that *he will be justified when he speaks*. Note, However we may see cause for our own information to *plead with God*, yet it becomes us to own that, whatever he says or does, he is *in the right*.

II. What it was in the dispensations of Divine Providence, that he stumbled at, and that he thought would bear a debate. It was that which has been a temptation to many wise and good men, and such a one as they had hardly got over. 1. They see the designs and projects of wicked people successful: *The way of the wicked prospers*; they compass their malicious designs, and gain their point. 2. They see their affairs and concerns in a good posture; *They are happy*, happy as the world can make them, though they *deal treacherously, very treacherously*, both with God and man. Hypocrites are chiefly meant, (as appears, *v. 2.*) who *dissemble* in their good professions, and *depart* from their good beginnings and good promises, and in both they *deal treacherously, very treacherously*. It has been said, that men cannot expect to prosper who are unjust and dishonest in their dealings; but these *deal treacherously*, and yet *they are happy*.

He shows (*v. 2.*) both their prosperity, and their abuse of their prosperity. (1.) God had been very indulgent to them, and they were got beforehand in

the world; "They are *planted* in a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and *thou hast planted them*; nay, thou didst *cast out the heathen* to plant them," Ps. xlv. 2.—lxxx. 8. Many a tree is planted, that yet never grows, or comes to any thing; but *they have taken root*, their prosperity seems to be confirmed and settled; they take root in the earth, for there they fix themselves, and thence they draw the sap of all their satisfaction. Yet many trees take root, which yet never come on; but these grow, yea, *they bring forth fruit*; their families are built up, they live high, and spend at a great rate; and all this was owing to the benignity of the Divine Providence, which smiled upon them, Ps. lxxiii. 7. (2.) Thus God had favoured them, though they had *dealt treacherously* with him: *Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins*. This was no uncharitable censure, for he spake by the Spirit of prophecy, without which it is not safe to charge men with hypocrisy, whose appearances are plausible. Observe, [1.] Though they cared not for *thinking* of God, nor had any sincere affection to him, yet they could *easily* persuade themselves to *speak* of him frequently, and with an air of seriousness. Piety from the teeth outward is no difficult thing. Many speak the language of Israel, that are not Israelites indeed. [2.] Though they had on all occasions the name of God ready in their mouth, and accustomed themselves to those forms of speech that savoured of piety, yet they could not persuade themselves to keep up the fear of God in their hearts. The form of godliness should engage us to keep up the power of it; but with them it did not so.

III. What comfort he had in appealing to God concerning his own integrity; (*v. 3.*) *But thou, O Lord, knowest me*. Probably, the wicked men he complains of were forward to reproach and censure him, (*ch. xviii. 18.*) in reference to which, this was his comfort, that God was a Witness of his integrity. God knew he was not such a one as *they were*, who had *God near in their mouths, but far from their reins*; nor such a one as they took him to be, and represented him, a deceiver and false prophet; that thus abused him did not know him; (1 Cor. ii. 8.) "*But thou, O Lord, knowest me*, though they think me not worth their notice." 1. Observe what the matter is, concerning which he appeals to God, *Thou knowest my heart toward thee*. Note, We are as our hearts are, and our hearts are good or bad, according as they are, or are not, *toward God*; and this is that therefore concerning which we should examine ourselves, that we may approve ourselves to God. 2. The cognizance to which he appeals; "*Thou knowest me better than I know myself*, not by hearsay or report, for *thou hast seen me*, not with a transient glance, but *thou hast tried my heart*. God's knowing of us is as clear and exact and certain, as if he had made the most strict scrutiny. Note, The God with whom we have to do, perfectly knows how our hearts are *toward him*. He knows both the guile of the hypocrite, and the sincerity of the upright.

IV. He prays that God would turn his hand against these wicked people, and not suffer them to prosper always, though they had prospered long; "Let some judgment come to *pull them out* of this fat pasture as *sheep for the slaughter*, that it may appear their long prosperity was but like the feeding of lambs in a large place, to *prepare them for the day of slaughter*," Hos. iv. 16. God suffered them to prosper, that by their pride and luxury they might fill up the measure of their iniquity, and so be ripened for destruction; and therefore he thinks it a piece of necessary justice, that they should fall into mischief themselves, because they had done so much mischief to others, that they

should be pulled out of their land, because they had brought ruin upon the land, and the longer they continued in it, the more hurt they did, as the plagues of their generation; (v. 4.) "*How long shall the land mourn* (as it does under the judgments of God inflicted upon it) *for the wickedness of them that dwell therein?*" Lord, shall they prosper themselves, that ruin all about them?" 1. See here what the judgment was, which the land was now groaning under; *The herbs of every field wither, the grass is burnt up, and all the products of the earth fail; and then it follows of course, the beasts are consumed, and the birds,* 1 Kings xviii. 5. 'This was the effect of a long drought, or want of rain, which happened, as it should seem, at the latter end of Josiah's reign, and the beginning of Jehoiakim's; it is mentioned, *ch. iii. 3.—viii. 13.—ix. 10, 12, and more fully afterwards, ch. xiv.* If they would have been brought to repentance by this lesser judgment, the greater had been prevented. Now, why was it that this fruitful land was turned into barrenness, but for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? Ps. cvii. 34. Therefore the prophet prays that these wicked people might die for their own sin, and that the whole nation might not suffer for it. 2. See here what was the language of their wickedness. *They said, He shall not see our last end;* God himself shall not. Atheism is the root of hypocrisy; therefore God is far from their reins, though near in their mouth, because they say, *How doth God know?* Ps. lxxiii. 11. Job xxii. 13. He knows not what way we take, nor what it will end in. Or, *Jeremiah shall not see our last end;* whatever he pretends, when he asks us what shall be in the end hereof, he cannot himself foresee it. They look upon him as a false prophet. Or, "Whatever it is, he shall not live to see it, for we will be the death of him," *ch. xi. 21.* Note, (1.) Men's setting their latter end at a great distance, or looking upon it as uncertain, is at the bottom of all their wickedness, Lam. i. 9. (2.) The whole creation groans under the burthen of the sin of man, Rom. viii. 22. It is for this, that *the earth mourns;* (so it may be read;) *cursed is the ground for thy sake.*

V. He acquaints us with the answer God gave to those complaints of his, v. 5, 6. We often had the prophets admonished, whose business it was to admonish others, as Isa. viii. 11. Ministers have lessons to learn, as well as lessons to teach, and must themselves hear God's voice, and preach to themselves. Jeremiah complained much of the wickedness of the men of Anathoth; and that, notwithstanding that, they prospered. Now this seems to be an answer to that complaint. 1. It is allowed that he had cause to complain; (v. 6.) "*Thy brethren, the priests of Anathoth, that are of the house of thy father, who ought to have protected thee, and pretended to do so, even they have dealt treacherously with thee,* have been false to thee, and, under colour of friendship, have designedly done thee all the mischief they could; they have called a multitude after thee, raised the mob upon thee, and incensed the common people against thee, to whom they have endeavoured, by all arts possible, to render thee despicable or odious, while at the same time they pretend that they had no design to persecute thee, or deprive thee of thy liberty. They are indeed such as thou canst not believe, though they speak fair words to thee. They seem to be thy friends, but are really thine enemies." Note, God's faithful servants must not think it at all strange, if their foes be those of their own house, (Matth. x. 36.) and if those they expect kindness from, prove such as they can put no confidence in, Mic. vii. 5. 2. Yet he is told that he carried the matter too far. (1.) He laid the unkindness of his countrymen too much to heart. *They wearied him,* because it was in a land

of peace wherein he trusted, v. 5. It was very grievous to him to be thus hated and abused by his own kindred. He was disturbed in his mind by it, his spirit was sunk and overwhelmed with it, so that he was in great agitation and distress about it. Nay, he was discouraged in his work by it, began to be weary of prophesying, and to think of giving it up. (2.) He did not consider that this was but the beginning of his sorrow, and that he had sorer trials yet before him; and whereas he should endeavour by a patient bearing of this trouble to prepare himself for greater, by his uneasiness under this he did but unfit himself for what further lay before him; *If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, and run thee quite out of breath, then how wilt thou contend with horses?* If the injuries done him by the men of Anathoth made such an impression upon him, what would he do when the princes and chief priests at Jerusalem should set upon him with their power, as they did afterward, *ch. xx. 2.—xxiii. 2.* If he was so soon tired in a land of peace, where there was little noise or peril, what would he do in the swellings of Jordan, when that overflows all its banks, and frightens even lions out of their thickets? *ch. xlix. 19.* Note, [1.] While we are in this world, we must expect troubles and difficulties. Our life is a race, a warfare; we are in danger of being run down. [2.] God's usual method being to begin with lesser trials, it is our wisdom to expect greater than any we have yet met with. We may be called out to contend with horsemen, and the sons of Anak may perhaps be reserved for the last encounter. [3.] It highly concerns us to prepare for such trials, and to consider what we should do in them. How shall we preserve our integrity and peace, when we come to the swelling of Jordan? [4.] In order to our preparation for further and greater trials, we are concerned to approve ourselves well in present lesser trials, to keep up our spirits, keep hold of the promise, keep in our way, with our eye upon the prize, so run that we may obtain it.

Some good interpreters understand this as spoken to the people, who were very secure, and fearless of the threatened judgments. If they have been so humbled and impoverished by lesser calamities, wasted by the Assyrians; if the Ammonites and Moabites, who were their brethren, and with whom they were in league, if these proved false to them, (as undoubtedly they would,) then how would they be able to deal with such a powerful adversary as the Chaldeans would be? How would they bear up their head against that invasion which should come like the swelling of Jordan?

7. I have forsaken my house, I have left my heritage; I have given the dearly-beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies. 8. My heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it. 9. My heritage is unto me as a speckled bird; the birds round about are against her; come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour. 10. Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. 11. They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto me; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart. 12. The spoilers are come upon all high places

through the wilderness: for the sword of the LORD shall devour from the *one* end of the land even to the *other* end of the land: no flesh shall have peace. 13. They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns; they have put themselves to pain, *but* shall not profit; and they shall be ashamed of your revenues, because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

The people of the Jews are here marked for ruin.

I. God is here brought in, falling out with them, and leaving them desolate; and they could never have been undone, if they had not provoked God to desert them. It is a terrible word that God here says, (v. 7.) *I have forsaken my house*; the temple, which had been his palace, they had polluted it, and so forced him out of it: *I have left mine heritage*, and will look after it no more; his people that he has taken such delight in, and care of, are now thrown out of his protection. They had been the *dearly beloved of his soul*, precious in his sight, and honourable above any people; which is mentioned to aggravate their sin, in returning him hatred for his love, and their misery, in throwing themselves out of the favour of one that had such a kindness for them, and to justify God in his dealings with them: he sought not occasion against them, but if they would have conducted themselves tolerably, he would have made the best of them, for they were the *beloved of his soul*; but they had conducted themselves so that they had provoked him to *give them into the hand of their enemies*, to leave them unguarded, an easy prey to those that bore them ill will. But what was the quarrel God had with a people that had been so long dear to him? Why, truly, they were degenerated. 1. They were become like *beasts of prey*, which nobody loves, but every body avoids and gets as far off from as they can; (v. 8.) *Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest*. Their sins cry to heaven for vengeance as loud as a lion roars. Nay, they *cry out against God* in the threatenings and slaughter which they breathe against his prophets that speak to them in his name; and what is said and done against them, God takes as said and done against himself. They blaspheme his name, oppose his authority, and bid defiance to his justice, and so *cry out against him as a lion in the forest*. They that were the *sheep of God's pasture*, are become barbarous and ravenous, and as ungovernable as lions in the forest, *therefore I hated them*: for what delight could the God of love take in a people that were now become as *roaring lions* and *raging beasts*, fit to be taken and shot at, as a vexation and torment to all about them? 2. They were become like *birds of prey*, and therefore also unworthy a place in God's house, where neither beasts nor birds of prey were admitted to be offered in sacrifice; (v. 9.) *Mine heritage is unto me as a bird with talons*; (so some read it, and so the margin;) they are continually pulling and pecking at one another, they have by their unnatural contentions made their country a cock-pit. Or, as a *speckled bird*, dyed, or sprinkled, or bedewed, with the blood of her prey; the shedding of innocent blood was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin, and hastened their ruin, not only as it provoked God against them, but as it provoked their neighbours likewise; for those that have their *hand against every man*, shall have *every man's hand against them*; (Gen. xvi. 12.) and so it follows here, the *birds round about are against her*. Some make her a *speckled, pied, or motley bird*, upon the account of their mixing the superstitious customs and usages of the heathen with divine institutions in the worship of

God; they were fond of a *party-coloured* religion, and thought it made them fine, when really it made them odious. God's turtle-dove is no *speckled bird*.

II. The enemies are here brought in *falling upon* them, and *laying them desolate*. And some think it is upon *this* account that they are compared to a *speckled bird*, because fowls make a noise about a bird of an odd, unusual colour. God's people are, among the children of this world, as *men wondered at*, as a *speckled bird*; but this people had by their own folly made themselves so; and the *beasts and birds* are called and commissioned to prey upon them, Let *all the birds round be against her*, for God has forsaken her, and with them let *all the beasts of the field come to devour*. Those that have made a prey of others, shall themselves be preyed upon. It did not *lessen* the sin of the nations, but very much *greatened* the misery of Judah and Jerusalem, that the desolation brought upon them was by order from heaven. The *birds and beasts* are perhaps called to feast upon the bodies of the slain, as in St. John's vision, Rev. xix. 17.

The utter desolation of the land by the Chaldean army is here spoken of as a thing done; so sure, so near, was it. God speaks of it as a thing which he had appointed to be done, and yet which he had no pleasure in, any more than in the death of other sinners.

1. See with what a tender affection he speaks of this land, notwithstanding the sinfulness of it, in remembrance of his covenant, and the tribute of honour and glory he had formerly had from it; It is *my vineyard, my portion, my pleasant portion*, v. 10. Note, God has a kindness and concern for his church, though there be much amiss in it; and his correcting of it will every way consist with his complacency in it.

2. See with what a tender compassion he speaks of the desolations of this land; *Many pastors*, the Chaldean generals that made themselves masters of the country, and ate it up with their armies as easily as the Arabian shepherds with their flocks eat up the fruits of a piece of ground that lies common; *they have destroyed my vineyard*, without any consideration had either of the value of it, or of my interest in it; they have with the greatest insolence and indignation *trodden it under foot*; and that which was a pleasant land they have made a *desolate wilderness*. The destruction was universal; *The whole land was made desolate*; (v. 11.) it is made so by the sword of war; *the spoilers*, the Chaldean soldiers, are come *through the plain upon all high places*; they have made themselves masters of all the natural fastnesses and artificial fortresses, v. 12. *The sword devours from one end of the land to the other*; all places lie exposed, and the numerous army of the invaders disperse themselves into every corner of that fruitful country, so that *no flesh shall have peace*, none shall be exempt from the calamity, nor be able to enjoy any tranquillity. *When all flesh have corrupted their way, no flesh shall have peace*; those only have peace, that *walk after the Spirit*.

3. See whence all this misery comes. (1.) It comes from the displeasure of God. It is *the sword of the Lord, that devours*, v. 12. While God's people keep close to him, the sword of their protectors and deliverers is the sword of the Lord, witness that of Gideon; but when they have forsaken him, so that he is become their Enemy, and fights against them, then the sword of their invaders and destroyers is become the *sword of the Lord*; witness this of the Chaldeans. It is *because of the fierce anger of the Lord*; (v. 13.) that was it which kindled this fire among them, and made their enemies so furious. And *who may stand before him, when he is angry?* (2.) It is their sin that has

made God their Enemy, particularly their incorrigibleness under former rebukes; (v. 11.) *The land mourns unto me*, the country that lies desolate does, as it were, pour out its complaint before God, and humbles itself under his hand; but the inhabitants are so senseless and stupid, that *none of them lays it to heart*; they do not *mourn to God*, but are unaffected with his displeasure, while the very ground they go upon shames them. Note, When God's hand is *lifted up*, and men *will not see*, it shall be *laid on*, and they shall be *made to feel*, Isa. xxvi. 11.

4. See how unble they should be to fence against it; (v. 13.) "*They have sown wheat, they have taken a deal of pains for their own security, and promised themselves great matters for their endeavours, but it is all in vain; they shall reap thorns, that which shall prove very grievous and vexatious to them; instead of helping themselves, they shall but make themselves more uneasy: they have put themselves to pain, both with their labour, and with their expectations, but it shall not profit; they shall not prevail to extricate themselves out of the difficulties into which they have plunged themselves. They shall be ashamed of your revenues, that they have depended so much upon their preparations for war, and particularly upon their ability to bear the charges of it.*" Money is the sinews of war; they thought they had enough of that, but shall be ashamed of it; *for their silver and gold shall not profit them in the day of the Lord's anger.*

14. Thus saith the LORD against all mine evil neighbours, that touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit; Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the house of Judah from among them. 15. And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land. 16. And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The LORD liveth; (as they taught my people to swear by Baal;) then shall they be built in the midst of my people. 17. But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the LORD.

The prophets sometimes, in God's name, delivered messages both of judgment and mercy to the nations that bordered on the land of Israel; but here is a message to them all in general, who had in their turns been one way or other injurious to God's people, had either oppressed them, or triumphed in their being oppressed. Observe,

I. What the quarrel was that God had with them. They were *his evil neighbours*, v. 14. evil neighbours to his church, and what they did against it he took as done against himself, and therefore called them *his evil neighbours*, that should have been *neighbourly* to Israel, but were quite otherwise. Note, It is often the lot of good people to live among bad neighbours, that are unkind and provoking to them; and it is bad indeed when they are *all so*. These *evil neighbours* were the Moabites, Ammonites, Syrians, Edomites, Egyptians, that had been evil neighbours to Israel in helping to debauch them, and draw them from God; therefore God calls them *his evil neighbours*, and now they helped to make them desolate, and joined

with the Chaldeans against them. It is just with God to make those the instruments of trouble to us, whom we have made instruments of sin. That which God lays to their charge, is, that they have *meddled with the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit*; they unjustly seized that which was none of their own; nay, they sacrilegiously turned that to their own use, which was given to God's peculiar people. He that said, *Touch not mine anointed*, said also, "*Touch not their inheritance*; it is at your peril if you do." Not only the persons, but the estates, of God's people are under his protection.

II. What course he would take with them. 1. He would break the power they had got over his people, and force them to make restitution; *I will pluck out the house of Judah from among them*; this would be a great favour to God's people, who had either been taken captive by them, or, when they fled to them for shelter, had been detained and made prisoners; but it would be a great mortification to their enemies, who would be like a lion disappointed of his prey. The house of Judah either cannot, or will not, make any bold struggles toward their own liberty; but God will with a gracious violence pluck them out, will by his Spirit compel them to come out, and by his power compel their taskmasters to let them go, as he plucked Israel out of Egypt. 2. He would bring upon them the same calamities that they had been instrumental to bring upon his people; *I will pluck them out of their land*. Judgment began at the house of God, but it did not end there. Nebuchadnezzar, when he had wasted the land of Israel, turned his hand against their evil neighbours, and was a scourge to them.

III. What mercy God had in store for such of them as would join themselves to him, and become his people, v. 15, 16. They had drawn in God's backsliding people to join with them in the service of idols. If now they would be drawn by a returning people to join with them in the service of the true and living God, they should not only have their enmity to the people of God forgiven them, but the distance which they had been kept at before should be removed, and they should be received to stand upon the same level with the Israel of God; this had its accomplishment in part, when, after the return out of captivity, many of the people of the lands that had been evil neighbours to Israel, became Jews; and was to have its full accomplishment in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ. Let not Israel, though injured by them, be implacable toward them, for God is not; *After that I have plucked them out in justice for their sins, and in jealousy for the honour of Israel, I will return, will change my way, and have compassion on them*. Though, being heathen, they can lay no claim to the mercies of the covenant, yet they shall have benefit by the compassions of the Creator, who will notwithstanding look upon them as the work of his hands. Note, God's controversies with his creatures, though they cannot be disputed, may be accommodated. Those who (as these here) have been not only strangers, but *enemies in their minds by wicked works*, may be reconciled, Col. i. 21. Observe here,

1. What were the terms on which God would show favour to them. It was always provided, *that they will diligently learn the ways of my people*. That is, in general, the ways that they walk in, when they believe, as *my people*, not the crooked ways into which they have turned aside; the ways which my people are directed to take. Note, (1.) There are good ways that are peculiarly the *ways of God's people*, which, however they may differ in the choice of their paths, they are all agreed to

walk in. The ways of holiness and heavenly-mindedness, of love and peaceableness, the ways of prayer and sabbath-sanctification, and diligent attendance on instituted ordinances—these, and the like, are *the ways of God's people*. (2.) Those that would have their lot with God's people, and their last end like theirs, must *learn their ways*, and walk in them; must observe the rule they walk by, and conform to that rule, and the steps they take by that rule, and go forth by those footsteps. By an intimate conversation with God's people they must learn to do as they do. (3.) It is impossible to learn the ways of God's people as they should be learned, without a great deal of care and pains: we must diligently observe these ways, and diligently oblige ourselves to walk in them; *look diligently*, (Heb. xii. 15.) and *work diligently*, Luke xiii. 24. In particular, they must learn to give honour to God's name, by making all their solemn appeals to him. They must learn to say, *The Lord liveth*, to own him, and to adore him, and to abide by his judgment; *as they taught my people to swear by Baal*. It was bad enough that they did themselves *swear by Baal*, worse that they taught others, and worst of all that they taught God's own people, who had been better taught: and yet, if they will at length reform, they shall be accepted. Observe, [1.] We must not despair of the conversion of the worst; no, not of those who have been instrumental to pervert and debauch others; even they may be brought to repentance, and, if they be, shall find mercy. [2.] Those whom we have been industrious to draw to that which is evil, when God opens their eyes and ours, we should be as industrious to follow in that which is good. It will be a holy revenge upon ourselves to become pupils to those in the way of duty, to whom we have been tutors in the way of sin. [3.] The conversion of the deceived may prove a happy occasion of the conversion even of the deceivers. Thus they who fell together into the ditch, are sometimes plucked together out of it.

2. What should be the tokens and fruits of this favour, when they return to God, and God to them. (1.) They shall be restored to, and re-established in, their own land; (v. 15.) *I bring them again, every man to his heritage*. The same hand that plucked them up, shall plant them again. (2.) They shall become entitled to the spiritual privileges of God's Israel; "If they will be towardly, and *learn the ways of my people*, will conform themselves to the rules, and confine themselves to the restraints, of my family, *then shall they be built in the midst of my people*. They shall not only be brought among them, to have a name and a place in the house of the Lord, where there was a court for the Gentiles, but they shall be *built* among them, they shall unite with them, the former enmities shall be slain, they shall be both edified and settled among them. See Isa. lvi. 5.—7. Note, They that diligently learn the ways of God's people, shall enjoy the privileges and comforts of his people.

IV. What should become of those that were still wedded to their own evil ways, yea though many of those about them turned to the Lord; (v. 17.) *If they will not obey*, if any of them continue to stand out, *I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation*, that family, that particular person, *saith the Lord*. Those that will not be ruled by the grace of God, shall be ruined by the justice of God. And if disobedient nations shall be destroyed, much more disobedient churches, from whom better things are expected.

CHAP. XIII.

still the prophet is attempting to awaken this secure and stubborn people to repentance, by the consideration of

the judgments of God that were coming upon them. He is to tell them, I. By the sign of a girdle spoiled, that their pride should be stained, v. 1. II. By the sign of bottles filled with wine, that their counsels should be blasted, v. 12. 14. III. In consideration hereof, he is to call them to repent, and humble themselves, v. 15. 21. IV. He is to convince them that it is for their obstinacy and incorrigibleness that the judgments of God are so prolonged, and brought to extremity, v. 22. 27.

1. **THUS** saith the LORD unto me, Go and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins, and put it not in water. 2. So I got a girdle, according to the word of the LORD, and put it on my loins. 3. And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, 4. Take the girdle that thou hast got, which is upon thy loins, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock. 5. So I went, and hid it by Euphrates, as the LORD commanded me. 6. And it came to pass after many days, that the LORD said unto me, Arise, go to Euphrates, and take the girdle from thence, which I commanded thee to hide there. 7. Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had hid it; and, behold, the girdle was marred, it was profitable for nothing. 8. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 9. Thus saith the LORD, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem. 10. This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing. 11. For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel, and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.

Here is,

I. A sign, the marring of a girdle which the prophet had worn for some time, by hiding it in a hole of a rock, near the river Euphrates. It was usual with the prophets to teach by signs, that a stupid, unthinking people might be brought to consider and believe, and be affected with what was thus set before them. 1. He was to wear a linen girdle for some time, v. 1, 2. Some think he wore it *under* his clothes, because it was linen, and it is said to *cleave to his loins*, v. 11. It should rather seem to be worn *upon* his clothes, for it was worn for a name and a praise, and probably was a fine sash, such as officers wear, and such as are commonly worn at this day in the eastern nations. He must not *put it in water*, but wear it as it was, that it might be the stronger, and less likely to rot. Linen wastes almost as much with washing as with wearing. Being not wet, it was the more stiff, and less apt to ply, yet he must make a shift to wear it. Probably, it was very fine linen, which will wear long without washing. The prophet, like John Baptist, was none of those that wore soft clothing.

and therefore it would be the more strange to see him with a linen girdle on, who probably used to wear a leathern one. 2. After he had worn this linen girdle for some time, he must go and *hide it in a hole of a rock*, (v. 4.) by the water's side, where, when the water was high, it would be wet, and when it fell, would grow dry again, and by that means would soon rot, sooner than if it were always wet or always dry. 3. After many days, he must look for it, and he should find it quite spoiled, gone all to rags, and good for nothing, v. 7. It has been of old a question among interpreters, whether this was really done, so as to be seen and observed by the people, or only in a dream or vision, so as to go no further than the prophet's own mind. It seems hard to imagine that the prophet should be sent on two such long journeys as to the river Euphrates, each of which would take him up some weeks time, when he could so ill be spared at home: for that reason, most incline to think the journey, at least, was only in vision, like that of Ezekiel, from the captivity in Chaldea to Jerusalem, (Ezek. viii. 3.) and from thence back to Chaldea, ch. xi. 24. The explanation of this sign is given only to the prophet himself, (v. 8.) not to the people, the sign not being public. But there being, it is probable, at that time, great conveniences of travelling between Jerusalem and Babylon, and some part of Euphrates being not so far off, but that it was made the utmost disorder of the land of promise, (Josh. i. 4.) I see no inconvenience in supposing the prophet to have made two journeys thither; for it is expressly said, *He did as the Lord commanded him*; and thus gave a signal proof of his obsequiousness to his God, to shame the stubbornness of a disobedient people; the toil of his journey would be very proper to signify both the pains they took to corrupt themselves with their idolatries, and the sad fatigue of their captivity; and Euphrates being the river of Babylon, which was to be the place of their bondage, was a material circumstance in this sign.

II. The thing signified by this sign. The prophet was willing to be at any cost and pains to affect this people with the word of the Lord: ministers must spend, and be spent, for the good of souls. We have the explanation of this sign, v. 9.—11.

1. The people of Israel had been to God as this girdle, in two respects. (1.) He had taken them into covenant and communion with himself; *As the girdle cleaves very close to the loins of a man*, and surrounds him, *so have I caused to cleave to me the houses of Israel and Judah*. They were a people near to God; (Ps. cxlviii. 14.) they were his own, a peculiar people to him, a kingdom of priests that had access to him above other nations. *He caused them to cleave to him by the law he gave them*, the prophets he sent among them, and the favours which in his providence he showed them. He required their stated attendance in the courts of his house, and the frequent ratification of their covenant with him by sacrifices: thus they were made so to cleave to him, that one would think they could never have been parted. (2.) He had herein designed his own honour; when he took them to be *to him for a people*, it was that they might be to him *for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory*; as a girdle is an ornament to a man, and particularly the *curious girdle of the ephod* was to the High Priest *for glory and for beauty*. Note, Those whom God takes to be to him *for a people*, he intends to be to him *for a praise*. [1.] It is their duty to honour him, by observing his institutions, and aiming therein at his glory, and thus adorning their profession. [2.] It is their happiness that he reckons himself honoured in them and by them. He is pleased with them, and glories in his relation to them, while they behaved themselves as becomes

his people. He was pleased to take it among the titles of his honour to be *the God of Israel*, even a *God to Israel*, 1 Chron. xvii. 24. In vain do we pretend to be to God *for a people*, if we be not to him *for a praise*.

2. They had by their idolatries and other iniquities loosed themselves from him, thrown themselves at a distance, robbed him of the honour they owed him, buried themselves in the earth, and foreign earth too, mingled themselves among the nations, and were so spoiled and corrupted, that they were *good for nothing*; they could no more be to God, as they were designed, *for a name and a praise, for they would not hear* either their duty to do it, or their privilege to value it; *They refused to hear the words of God*, by which they might have been kept still cleaving close to him; *They walked in the imagination of their heart*, wherever their fancy led them; and denied themselves no gratification they had a mind to, particularly in their worship; *They would not cleave to God, but walked after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them*; they doted upon the gods of the heathen nations that lay towards Euphrates, so that they were quite spoiled for the service of their own God, and were *as this girdle*, this rotten girdle, a disgrace to their profession, and not an ornament. A thousand pities it was, that such a girdle should be so spoiled, that such a people should be so wretchedly degenerate.

3. God would by his judgments separate them from him, send them into captivity, deface all their beauty, and ruin their excellency, so that they should be like a fine girdle gone to rags, a worthless, useless, despicable people. God will after this manner *mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem*. He would strip them of all that which was the matter of their pride, of which they boasted, and in which they trusted; it should not only be sullied and stained, but quite destroyed, like this linen girdle. Observe, He speaks of *the pride of Judah*; the country people were proud of their holy land, their good land, but it is the *great pride of Jerusalem*, there the temple was, and the royal palace, and therefore those citizens were more proud than the inhabitants of other cities. God takes notice of the degrees of men's pride, the pride of some, and the great pride of others; and he will mar it, he will stain it. Pride will have a fall, for God resists the proud. He will either *mar the pride* that is in us, that is, *mortify* it by his grace, make us ashamed of it, and, like Hezekiah, humble us for the pride of our hearts, the great pride, and cure us of it, great as it is; (and this marring of the pride will be the making of the soul; happy for us, if by humbling providences our hearts be humbled;) or else, he will mar the thing we are proud of. Parts, gifts, learning, power, external privileges, if we are proud of these, it is just with God to blast them; even the temple, when it became Jerusalem's pride, was marred and laid in ashes. It is the honour of God to *look upon every one that is proud, and abase him*.

12. Therefore thou shalt speak unto them this word, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine; and they shall say unto thee, Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled with wine? 13. Then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings that sit upon David's throne, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, with drunkenness. 14. And I will dash them one against another,

even the fathers and the sons together, saith the LORD; I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them. 15. Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the LORD hath spoken. 16. Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, *and* make it gross darkness. 17. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for *your* pride; and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD's flock is carried away captive. 18. Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves, sit down; for your principalities shall come down, *even* the crown of your glory. 19. The cities of the south shall be shut up, and none shall open *them*; Judah shall be carried away captive all of it, it shall be wholly carried away captive. 20. Lift up your eyes, and behold them that come from the north; where *is* the flock *that* was given thee, thy beautiful flock? 21. What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee? (for thou hast taught them *to be* captains, *and* as chief over thee;) shall not sorrows take thee, as a woman in travail?

Here is,

I. A judgment threatened against this people, that would quite intoxicate them. This doom is pronounced against them in a figure, to make it the more taken notice of, and the more affecting, (v. 12.) *Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine*; those that by their sins have made themselves *vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*, shall be filled with the wrath of God, as a bottle is with wine; and as every vessel of mercy prepared for glory shall be filled with mercy and glory, so they shall *be full of the fury of the Lord*, (Isa. ii. 20.) and they shall be brittle as bottles; and as *old bottles* into which *new wine* is put, they shall burst and be broken to pieces; (Matth. ix. 17.) or, They shall have their heads as full of wine as bottles are; for so it is explained, v. 13. *They shall be filled with drunkenness*; compare Isa. li. 17. It is probable that this was a common proverb among them, applied divers ways; but they, not being aware of the prophet's meaning in it, ridiculed him for it; "*Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled with wine?*" What strange thing is there in that? Tell us something that we did not know before." Perhaps they were thus touchy with the prophet, because they apprehended this to be a reflection upon them for their drunkenness, and probably, it was in part so intended. *They love flagons of wine*, Hos. iii. 1. They made their king *sick with bottles of wine*, Hos. vii. 5. Their watchmen were all *for wine*, Isa. lvi. 15. They love their false prophets, *that prophesied to them of wine*, (Mich. ii. 11.) that bid them be merry, for that they should never want their bottle to make them so. "Well," says the prophet, "you shall have your *bottles full of wine*, but not such wine as you desire." They suspected that he had some mystical meaning in it, which prophesied no good concerning them, but evil; and he owns that so he had. What he meant was this,

1. That they should be as giddy as men in drink. A drunken man is fitly compared to a bottle or cask full of wine; for when the wine is in, the wit, and wisdom, and virtue, and all that is good for any thing, are out. Now God threatens, (v. 13.) that they shall all be *filled with drunkenness*; they shall be full of confusion in their counsels, shall falter in all their talk, and stagger in all their motions; they shall not know what they say or do, much less what they should say or do. They shall be sick of all their enjoyments, and throw them up as drunken men do, Job xx. 15. They shall fall into a slumber, and be utterly unable to help themselves, and, like men that have drunk away their reason, shall lie at the mercy, and expose themselves to the contempt, of all about them. And this shall be the condition not of some among them; (if any had been sober, they might have helped the rest;) but even *the kings that sit upon the throne of David*, that should have been like their father David, who was *wise as an angel of God*, shall be thus intoxicated. Their *priests* and *prophets* too, their false *prophets*, that pretended to guide them, were as indulgent of their lusts, and therefore were justly as much deprived of their senses, as any other. Nay, and all the *inhabitants both of the land and of Jerusalem* were as far gone as they. Whom God will destroy, he infatuates.

2. That, being giddy, they should run upon one another. The cup of the wine of the Lord's fury shall throw them not only into a lethargy, so that they shall not be able to help themselves or one another, but into a perfect phrenzy, so that they shall do mischief to themselves and one another; (v. 14.) *I will dash a man against his brother*. Not only their *drunken follies*, but their *drunken frays*, shall help to ruin them. Drunken men are often quarrelsome, and upon that account they have *wo and sorrow*; (Prov. xxiii. 29, 30.) so their sin is their punishment; it was so here. God sent an *evil spirit* into families and neighbourhoods, (as Judg. ix. 23.) which made them jealous of, and spiteful towards, one another; so that *the fathers and sons* went together by the ears, and were ready to pull one another to pieces, which made them all an easy prey to the common enemy. This decree against them being gone forth, God says, *I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them*; for *they will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy*, but destroy one another; see Hab. ii. 15, 16.

II. Here is good counsel given, which, by being taken, might prevent this desolation. It is, in short, *to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God*. If they will *hearken and give ear*, this is that which God has to say to them, *Be not proud*, v. 15. This was one of the sins for which God had a controversy with them; (v. 9.) let them mortify and forsake this sin, and God will let fall his controversy. "*Be not proud*; when God speaks to you by his prophets, do not think yourselves too good to be taught; be not scornful, be not wilful, let not your hearts rise against the word, nor slight the messengers that bring it you. When God is coming forth against you in his providence, (and by them he speaks,) be not secure when he threatens, be not impatient when he strikes, for pride is at the bottom of both." It is the great God that has *spoken*, whose authority is incontestable, whose power is irresistible; therefore bow to what he says, and *be not proud*, as you have been.

They must not be proud, for,

1. They must advance God, and study how to do him honour; "*Give glory to the Lord your God*, and not to your idols, not to other gods. Give him glory, by confessing your sins, owning yourselves guilty before him, and accepting the punishment of your iniquity, v. 16. Give him glory by a sincere repentance and reformation." Then, and not till

then, we begin to live as we should, and to some good purpose, when we begin to *give glory to the Lord our God*; to make his honour your chief end, and to seek it accordingly. "Do this quickly, while your space to repent is continued to you; *before he cause darkness*, before he bring his judgments upon you, which you will see no way of escaping." Note, Darkness will be the portion of those that will not repent, to *give glory to God*. When those that by the fourth vial were scorched with heat, *repented not, to give glory to God*, the next vial filled them with darkness, Rev. xvi. 9, 10. The aggravation of the darkness here threatened, is, (1.) That their attempts to escape shall hasten their ruin; *Their feet shall stumble* when they are making all the haste they can over the *dark mountains*, and they shall fall, and be unable to get up again. Note, Those that think to outrun the judgment of God, will find their road impassable; let them make the best of their way, they can make nothing of it, the judgments that pursue them will overtake them; their way is *dark and slippery*, Ps. xxxv. 6. And therefore, before it comes to that extremity, it is our wisdom to *give glory to him*, and so make our peace with him; to fly to his mercy, and then there will be no occasion to fly from his justice. (2.) That their hopes of a better state of things will be disappointed; *While ye look for light*, for comfort and relief, he will *turn it into the shadow of death*, which is very dismal and terrible, and make it *gross darkness*, like that of Egypt, when Pharaoh continued to harden his heart, which was darkness that might be felt. The expectation of impenitent sinners perishes, *when they die*, and think to have it satisfied.

2. They must abase themselves, and take shame to themselves; the prerogative of the king and queen will not exempt them from this; (v. 18.) "*Say to the king and queen*, that, great as they are, they must *humble themselves* by true repentance, and so give both glory to God and a good example to their subjects." Note, Those that are exalted above others in the world, must humble themselves before God, who is higher than the highest, and to whom kings and queens are accountable. They must *humble themselves*, and *sit down*; sit down, and consider what is coming; sit down in the dust, and lament themselves. Let them *humble themselves*, for God will otherwise take an effectual course to humble them. "*Your principalities shall come down*, the honour and power on which you value yourselves, and in which you confide, *even the crown of your glory*, your *goodly or glorious crown*; when you are led away captives, where will your principality and all the badges of it be then?" Blessed be God, there is a crown of glory, which those shall inherit who do humble themselves, that shall never come down.

III. This counsel is enforced by some arguments, if they continue proud and unhumiled.

1. It will be the prophet's *unspeakable grief*; (v. 15.) "*If you will not hear it*, will not submit to the word, but continue refractory, not only mine eye, but *my soul, shall weep in secret places*." Note, The obstinacy of people, in refusing to hear the word of God, will be a heart-breaking to their poor ministers, who know something of the terrors of the Lord and the worth of souls, and are so far from desiring, that they tremble at, the thoughts of the death of sinners. His grief for it was undisssembled, his *soul wept*; and void of affectation, for he chose to weep in *secret places*, where no eye saw him but his who is all eye. He would mingle his tears not only with his public preaching, but with his private devotions. Nay, thoughts of their case would make him melancholy, and he would become a perfect recluse. It would grieve him, (1.) To see

their sins unrepented of; "*My soul shall weep for your pride*, your haughtiness, and stubbornness, and vain confidence." Note, The sins of others should be matter of sorrow to us. We must mourn for that which we cannot mend; and mourn the more for it, because we cannot mend it. (2.) To see their calamity past redress and remedy; "*Mine eyes shall weep sore*, not so much because my relations, friends, and neighbours are in distress, but *because the Lord's flock*, his people, and the sheep of his pasture, *are carried away captive*." That should always grieve us most, by which God's honour suffers, and the interest of his kingdom is weakened.

2. It will be their own inevitable ruin, v. 19.—21.

(1.) The land shall be laid waste; *The cities of the south shall be shut up*. The cities of Judah lay in the southern part of the land of Canaan; these shall be straitly besieged by the enemy, so that there shall be no going in and out; or they shall be deserted by the inhabitants, that there shall be none to go in and out. Some understand it of the cities of Egypt, which was south from Judah; the places there, whence they expected succours, shall fail them, and they shall find no access to them.

(2.) The inhabitants shall be hurried away into a foreign country, there to live in slavery; *Judah shall be carried away captive*. Some were already carried off, which they hoped might serve to answer the prediction, and that the residue should still be left; no, *it shall be carried away all of it*; God will make a full end with them, *it shall be wholly carried away*. So it was in the last captivity under Zedekiah, because they repented not.

(3.) The enemy was now at hand, that should do this; (v. 20.) "*Lift up your eyes*. I see them upon their march, and you may, if you will, *behold them that come from the north*, from the land of the Chaldeans; see how fast they advance, how fierce they appear." Upon this, he addresses himself to the king, or, rather, (because the pronouns are feminine,) to the city or state. [1.] "What will you do now with the people which is committed to your charge, and which you ought to protect? *Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?* Whither canst thou take them now for shelter? How can they escape these ravening wolves?" Magistrates must look upon themselves as shepherds, and those that are under their charge as *their flock*, which they are intrusted with the care of, and must give an account of; they must take delight in them as *their beautiful flock*, and consider what to do for their safety in times of public danger. Masters of families, who neglect their children, and suffer them to perish for want of a good education, and ministers who neglect their people, should think they hear God putting this question to them, *Where is the flock that was given thee to feed, that beautiful flock?* It is starved, it is left exposed to the beasts of prey. What account wilt thou give of them when the Chief Shepherd shall appear?

[2.] "What have you to object against the equity of God's proceedings? *What wilt thou say when he shall visit upon thee* the former days? Thou canst say nothing, but that *God is just in all that is brought upon thee*." They that flatter themselves with hopes of impunity, what will they say! What confusion will cover their faces, when they shall find themselves deceived, and that God punishes them!

[3.] "What thoughts wilt you now have of your own folly, in giving the Chaldeans such power over you, by seeking to them for assistance, and joining in league with them? Thus thou hast taught them *against thyself to be captains*, and to *become the head*." Hezekiah began, when he showed his treasures to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, tempting him thereby to come and plunder him. Those who, having a God to trust to, court foreign

alliances, and confide in them, do but make rods for themselves, and teach their neighbours how to become their masters. [4.] "How will you bear the trouble that is at the door? *Shall not sorrows take thee as a woman in travail?* Sorrows which thou canst not escape or put off, extremity of sorrows; and in *these* respects more grievous than those of a woman in travail, that they were not *expected before*, and that there is no *man-child* to be born, the joy of which shall make them *afterward* to be forgotten."

22. And if thou say in thy heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare. 23. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? *then* may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. 24. Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble that passeth away by the wind of the wilderness. 25. This is thy lot, the portion of thy measures from me, saith the LORD; because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood. 26. Therefore will I discover thy skirts upon thy face, that thy shame may appear. 27. I have seen thine adulteries, and thy neighings, the lewdness of thy whoredom, and thine abominations on the hills in the fields. Wo unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean! when *shall it once be?*

Here is,

I. Ruin threatened, as before, that the Jews shall go into captivity, and fall under all the miseries of beggary and bondage; shall be stripped of their clothes, *their skirts discovered*, for want of upper garments to cover them, and their *heels made bare*, for want of shoes, v. 22. Thus they used to deal with prisoners taken in war, when they drove them into captivity, *naked and barefoot*, Isa. xx. 4. Being thus carried off into a strange country, they shall be scattered there, as the stubble that is blown away by the wind of the wilderness, and nobody is concerned to bring it together again, v. 24. If the stubble escape the fire, it shall be carried away by the wind. If one judgment do not the work, another, shall with those that by sin have made themselves as stubble. They shall be stripped of all their ornaments, and exposed to shame, as harlots that are carted, v. 26. They made their pride appear, but God will make their shame appear; so that those who have boasted on them, shall be ashamed of them.

II. An inquiry made by the people into the cause of this ruin, v. 22. Thou wilt say in thine heart, (and God knows how to give a proper answer to what men say in their hearts, though they do not speak it out; *Jesus knowing their thoughts*, replied to them, Matth. ix. 4.) *Wherefore came these things upon me?* The question is supposed to come into the heart, 1. Of a sinner quarrelling with God, and refusing to receive correction; they could not see that they had done any thing which might justly provoke God to be thus angry with them. They durst not speak it out; but in their hearts they thus charged God with unrighteousness, as if he had laid upon them more than was meet. They seek for the cause of their calamities, when, if they had not been wilfully blind, they might easily have seen it. Or, 2. Of a sinner returning to God. If there come but a penitent thought into the heart at any time, (saying, *What have I done?* ch. viii. 6. Where-

fore am I in affliction? Why doth God contend with me?) God takes notice of it, and is ready by his Spirit to impress the conviction, that, sin being discovered, it may be repented of.

III. An answer to this inquiry. God will be justified when he speaks, and will oblige us to justify him; and therefore will set the sin of sinners in order before them. Do they ask, *Wherefore come these things upon us?* Let them know, it is all owing to themselves.

1. It is for the greatness of their iniquities, v. 22. God does not take advantage against them for small faults; no, the sins for which he now punishes them are of the first rate, very heinous in their own nature, and highly aggravated; for the multitude of thine iniquity; so it may be read. Sins of every kind, and often repeated and relapsed into. Some think we are more in danger from the multitude of our lesser sins than from the heinousness of our greater sins; of both we may say, *Who can understand his errors?*

2. It is for their obstinacy in sin; their being so long accustomed to it, that there was little hope left of their being reclaimed from it, v. 23. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin*, that is by nature black, or the leopard his spots, that are even woven into the skin? Dirt contracted may be washed off, but we cannot alter the natural colour of a hair, (Matth. v. 36.) much less of the skin; and so impossible is it, morally impossible, to reclaim and reform these people. (1.) They had been long accustomed to do evil; they were taught to do evil, they had been educated and brought up in sin, they had served an apprenticeship to it, and had all their days made a trade of it. It was so much their constant practice, that it was become a second nature to them. (2.) Their prophets therefore despaired of ever bringing them to do good. That was it they aimed at; they persuaded them to cease to do evil, and learn to do well, but could not prevail. They had so long been used to do evil, that it was next to impossible for them to repent, and amend, and begin to do good. Note, Custom in sin is a very great hindrance to conversion from sin. The disease that is inveterate, is generally thought incurable. Those that have been long accustomed to sin, have shaken off the restraints of fear and shame; their consciences are seared, the habits of sin are confirmed, it pleads prescription, and it is just with God to give those up to their own hearts' lusts, that have long refused to give up themselves to his grace. Sin is the blackness of the soul, the deformity of it; it is its spot, the discolouring of it; it is natural to us, we were shapen in it, so that we cannot get clear of it by any power of our own; but there is an almighty grace that is able to change the Ethiopian's skin, and that grace shall not be wanting to these that in a sense of their need of it seek it earnestly, and improve it faithfully.

3. It is for their treacherous departures from the God of truth, and dependence on lying vanities; (v. 25.) "This is thy lot, to be scattered and driven away; this is the portion of thy measures from me, the punishment assigned thee as by line and measure; this shall be thy share of the miseries of this world; expect it, and think not to escape it: it is because thou hast forgotten me, the favours I have bestowed upon thee, and the obligations thou art under to me; thou hast no sense, no remembrance, of these." Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of all sin, as the remembrance of our Creator betimes is the happy and hopeful beginning of a holy life. "Having forgotten me, thou hast trusted in falsehood, in idols, in an arm of flesh, in Egypt and Assyria, in the self-flatteries of a deceitful heart." Whatever those trust to, that forsake God, they will find it a broken reed, a broken cistern.

4. It is for their idolatry, their spiritual whoredom, that sin which is of all other most provoking to the *jealous God*. Therefore they are exposed to a *shameful calamity*, (v. 26.) because they have been guilty of a *shameful iniquity*, and yet are shameless in it; (v. 27.) "*I have seen thine adulteries, thine inordinate fancy for strange gods, which thou hast been impatient for the gratification of, and hast even neighed after it; even the lewdness of thy whoredoms, thine impudence and insatiableness in them, thy eager worshipping of idols on the hills in the fields, upon the high places.*" This is that for which a *wo* is denounced against thee, O Jerusalem; nay, and many woes."

IV. Here is an affectionate expostulation with them, in the close, upon the whole matter. Though it was adjusted next to impossible for them to be brought to do good, (v. 23.) yet, while there is life there is hope, and therefore still he reasons with them, to bring them to repentance, v. 27. 1. He reasons with them concerning the thing itself; *Wilt thou not be made clean?* Note, It is the great concern of those who are polluted by sin, to be made clean by repentance and faith, and universal reformation. The reason why sinners are not made clean, is, because they will not be made clean; and herein they act most unreasonably. "*Wilt thou not be made clean?*" Surely thou wilt at length be persuaded to *wash thee, and make thee clean*, and be so wise for thyself." 2. Concerning the time of it; *When shall it once be?* Note, It is an instance of the wonderful grace of God, that he desires the repentance and conversion of sinners, and thinks the time long till they are brought to it; but it is an instance of the wonderful folly of sinners, that they put that off from time to time, which is of such absolute necessity, that, if it be not done some time, they are certainly undone for ever. They do not say that they will *never* be cleansed, but not *yet*; they will defer it to a more convenient season, but cannot tell us *when it shall once be*.

CHAP. XIV.

This chapter was penned upon occasion of a great drought, for want of rain. This judgment began in the latter end of Josiah's reign, but, as it should seem, continued in the beginning of Jehoiakim's: for lesser judgments are sent to give warning of greater coming, if not prevented by repentance. This calamity was mentioned several times before, but here, in this chapter, more fully. Here is, I. A melancholy description of it, v. 1..6. II. A prayer to God to put an end to this calamity, and to return in mercy to their land, v. 7..9. III. A severe threatening, that God would proceed in his controversy, because they proceeded in their iniquity, v. 10..12. IV. The prophet's excusing the people, by laying the blame on their false prophets; and the doom passed both on the deceivers and the deceived, v. 13..16. V. Direction given to the prophet, instead of interceding for them, to lament them, yet he continued to intercede for them, v. 17..22.

I. **THE** word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth. 2. Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. 3. And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with the vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. 4. Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the ploughmen were ashamed, they covered their heads. 5. Yea, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook it, because there

was no grass. 6. And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because *there was* no grass. 7. O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou *it* for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee. 8. O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? 9. Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou, O LORD, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.

The first verse is the title of the whole chapter: it does indeed all *concern the dearth*, but much of it is the prophet's prayers concerning it; yet these are not unftly said to be, *The word of the Lord which came to him* concerning it; for every acceptable prayer is that which God *puts into our hearts*; nothing is our word that *comes to him*, but what is first his word that *comes from him*. In these verses, we have,

1. *The language of nature lamenting the calamity.* When the heavens were as brass, and distilled no dews, the earth was as iron, and produced no fruits; and then the grief and confusion were universal.

1. The people of the land were all in tears. *Destroy their vines and their fig-trees, and you cause all their mirth to cease*, Hos. ii. 11, 12. All their joy fails with the *joy of harvest*, with that of their *corn and wine*, v. 2. Judah mourns, not for the sin, but for the trouble; for the withholding of the rain, not for the withdrawing of God's favour. *The gates thereof*, all that go in and out at their gates *languish*, look pale, and grow feeble, for want of the necessary supports of life, and for fear of the further fatal consequences of this judgment. *The gates*, through which supplies of corn formerly used to be brought into their cities, now look melancholy; when, instead of that, the inhabitants are departing through them to seek for bread in other countries. Even those that sit in the gates *languish*; *they are black unto the ground*, they go in black as mourners, and sit on the ground; as the poor beggars at the gates are *black in the face*, for want of food, *blacker than a coal*, Lam. iv. 8. Famine is represented by a black horse, Rev. vi. 5. They fall to the ground through weakness, not being able to go along the streets. *The cry of Jerusalem* (that is, of the inhabitants) *is gone up*; for the city is *served by the field*; or, of people from all parts of the country met at Jerusalem to pray for rain; so some. But I fear it was rather the cry of their trouble, and the cry of their sin, than the cry of their prayer.

2. The great men of the land felt from this judgment; (v. 3.) *The nobles sent their little ones to the water*, perhaps their own children, having been forced to part with their servants, because they had not wherewithal to keep them; and being willing to train up their children, when they were little, to labour, especially in a case of necessity, as this was. We find Ahab and Obadiah, the king and the lord chamberlain of his household, in their own persons, seeking for water in such a time of distress as this was, 1 Kings xviii. 5, 6. Or, rather, *their meaner ones*, their servants, and small officers; these they sent to seek for water, which there is no living without; but there was none to be found, they *returned*

with their vessels empty, the springs were dried up, when there was no rain to feed them; and then *they* (their masters that sent them) *were ashamed and confounded* at their disappointment. They would not be ashamed of their sins, nor confounded at the sense of them, but were unhumiliated under the reproaches of the word, thinking their wealth and dignity set them above repentance; but God took a course to make them ashamed of that which they were so proud of, when they found that even on this side hell their nobility would not purchase them a *drop of water* to cool their tongue. Let our reading the account of this calamity make us thankful for the mercy of water, that we may not by the feeling of the calamity be taught to value it. What is most *useful* is most *plentiful*.

3. The husbandmen felt most sensibly and immediately from it; (v. 4.) *The ploughmen were ashamed*, for the ground was so parched and hard, that it would not admit the plough, even then when it was so *chapt* and cleft, that it seemed as if it did not need the plough. They were ashamed to be idle, for there was nothing to be done, and therefore nothing to be expected. *The sluggard, that will not plough by reason of cold*, is not ashamed of his own *folly*; but the diligent husbandman, that cannot plough by reason of heat, is ashamed of his own *affliction*. See what an immediate dependence husbandmen have upon the Divine Providence, which therefore they should always have an eye to, for they cannot plough or sow in hope, unless God *water their furrows* Ps. lxxv. 10.

4. The case even of the wild beasts was very pitiable, v. 5, 6. Man's sin brings those judgments upon the earth, which make even the inferior creatures *groan*; and the prophet takes notice of this as a plea with God for mercy; Judah and Jerusalem have sinned, but the hinds and the wild asses, what have they done? The hinds are *pleasant* creatures, lovely and loving, and particularly tender of their young; and yet such is the extremity of the case, that, contrary to the instinct of their nature, they *leave their young*, even when they are newly *calved*, and most need them, to seek for grass elsewhere; and if they can find none, they *abandon* them, because not able to *suckle* them. It grieved not *the hind* so much, that she had no grass *for herself*, as that she had none *for her young*; which will shame those who spend that upon their lusts, which they should preserve for their families. The hind, when she has brought forth her young, is said to have *cast forth her sorrows*, (Job xxxix. 3.) and yet she continues her *cares*; but, as it follows there, she soon sees the good effect of them, for *her young ones* in a little while *grow up*, and trouble her no more, v. 4. But here the great trouble of all is, that she has nothing for them. Nay, one would be sorry even for the *wild asses*, (though they are creatures that none have any great affection for,) for though the *barren land* is made *their dwelling* at the best, (Job xxxix. 5, 6.) yet even that is now made too hot for them, so hot, that they cannot breathe in it, but they get to the *highest places* they can reach, where the air is coolest, and *snuff up the wind like dragons*, like those creatures which, being very hot, are continually panting for breath. *Their eyes fail*, and so does their strength, *because there is no grass* to support them. The tame ass, that serves her owner, is welcome to *his crib*, (Isa. i. 3.) and has her keeping for her labour; when the *wild ass* that *scorns the crying of the driver*, is forced to *live upon air*, and is well enough served for not serving; *he that will not labour, let him not eat*.

11. Here is the language of *grace*, lamenting the *iniquity*, and complaining to God of the calamity. The people are not forward to pray, but the prophet here prays for them, and so excites them to

pray for themselves, and puts words into their mouths, which they may make use of, in hopes to speed, v. 7.—9. In this prayer,

1. Sin is humbly confessed. When we come to pray for the preventing or removing of any judgment, we must always acknowledge that we deserve it, and a thousand times worse. We cannot hope by extenuating the crime to obtain a mitigation of the punishment, but must acknowledge that *our iniquities testify against us*. Our sins are witnesses against us, and true penitents see them to be such. They *testify*, for they are plain and evident, we cannot deny the charge; they *testify against us*, for our conviction; which tends to our present shame and confusion, and our future condemnation. They disprove and overthrow all our pleas for ourselves; and so not only accuse us, but *answer against us*. If we boast of our own excellencies, and trust to our own righteousness, our iniquities *testify against us*, and prove us perverse. If we quarrel with God as dealing unjustly or unkindly with us in afflicting us, our iniquities testify against us, that we do him wrong; for *our backslidings are many*, and *our revolts are great*, whereby *we have sinned against thee*; too numerous to be concealed, for they are *many*, too heinous to be excused, for they are *against thee*.

2. Mercy is earnestly begged; “*Though our iniquities testify against us*, and against the granting of the favour which the necessity of our case calls for, yet *do thou it*.” They do not say particularly what they would have done; but, as becomes penitents and beggars, they refer themselves to God; “Do with us as thou thinkest fit,” Judg. x. 15. Not, *Do thou it* in this way, or at this time, but, “*Do thou it for thy name's sake*; do that which will be most for the glory of thy name.” Note, Our best pleas in prayer are those that are fetched from the glory of God's own name; “Lord, do it, that thy mercy may be magnified, thy promise fulfilled, and thine interest in the world kept up; we have nothing to plead *in ourselves*, but every thing *in thee*.” There is another petition in this prayer, and it is a very modest one, (v. 9.) “*Leave us not*, withdraw not thy favour and presence.” Note, We should dread and deprecate God's departure from us, more than the removal of any of all our creature-comforts.

3. Their relation to God, their interest in him, and their expectations from him grounded thereupon, are most pathetically pleaded with him, v. 8, 9.

(1.) They look upon him as one they have reason to think should deliver them when they are in distress, yea, though their iniquities testify against them; for in him mercy has often rejoiced against judgment. The prophet, like Moses of old, is willing to make the best he can of the case of his people, and therefore, though he must own that *they have sinned many a great sin*, (Exod. xxxii. 31.) yet he pleads, *Thou art the Hope of Israel*. God has encouraged his people to hope in him; in calling himself so often the *God of Israel*, the *Rock of Israel*, and the *Holy One of Israel*, he has made himself the *Hope of Israel*. He has given Israel his word to hope in, and caused them to hope in it; and there are those yet in Israel, that make God alone *their Hope*, and expect he will be *their Saviour in time of trouble*, and they look not for salvation in any other; “Thou hast many a time been such, in the time of their extremity.” Note, Since God is his people's all-sufficient Saviour, they ought to hope in him, in their greatest straits; and since he is their only Saviour, they ought to hope in him alone. They plead likewise, “*Thou art in the midst of us*, we have the special tokens of thy presence with us, thy temple, thine ark, thine oracles, and *we are called by thy name*, the *Israel of God*; and therefore we have reason to hope thou wilt not leave us; *we are*

thine, save us. Thy name is called upon us, and therefore what evils we are under reflect dishonour upon thee, as if thou wast not able to relieve thine own." The prophet had often told the people, that their profession of religion would not protect them from the judgments of God; yet here he pleads it with God, as Moses, Exod. xxxii. 11. Even this may go far as to temporal punishments with a God of mercy. *Valcat quantum valere potest—Let the plea avail as far as it is fit that it should.*

(2.) It therefore grieves them to think that he does not appear for their deliverance; and though they do not charge it upon him as *unrighteous*, they humbly plead it with him why he should be *gracious*, for the glory of his own name. For otherwise he will seem, [1.] Unconcerned for his own people; *What will the Egyptians say?* They will say, "Israel's Hope and Saviour does not mind them, he is become as a *stranger in the land*, that does not at all interest himself in its interests; his temple, which he called his *rest for ever*, is no more so, but he is in it as a *wayfaring man, that turns aside to tarry but for a night* in an inn, which he never inquires into the affairs of, nor is in any care about. Though God never is, yet he seems to be, as if he cared not what became of his church: Christ slept when his disciples were in a storm. [2.] Incapable of giving them any relief; the eunuchs once said, Because the Lord *was not able to bring* his people to Canaan, he let them *perish in the wilderness*; (Numb. xiv. 16.) so now they will say, "Either his wisdom or his power fails him; either he is as a *man astonished*, who, though he has the reason of a man, yet, being astonished, is quite at a loss and at his wit's end; or, as a *mighty man*, who is overpowered by such as are more mighty, and therefore *cannot save*, though *mighty*, yet a *man*, and therefore having his power limited." Either of these would be a most insufferable reproach to the divine perfections; and therefore, why is the God that we are sure *is in the midst of us* become as a *stranger*? Why does the almighty God seem as if he were no more than a mighty man; who, when he is *astonished*, though he would, yet *cannot save*? It becomes us in prayer to show ourselves concerned more for God's glory than for our own comfort: Lord, *what wilt thou do unto thy great name?*

10. Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet; therefore the LORD doth not accept them: he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. 11. Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for *their* good. 12. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt-offering and an oblation, I will not accept them; but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence. 13. Then said I, Ah, LORD God! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. 14. Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name; I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. 15. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning

the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed. 16. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem, because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters; for I will pour their wickedness upon them.

The dispute between God and his prophet, in this chapter, seems to be like that between the owner and the dresser of the vineyard concerning the barren fig-tree, Luke xiii. 7. The justice of the owner condemns it to be *cut down*, the clemency of the dresser intercedes for a reprieve: Jeremiah had been earnest with God, in prayer, to return in mercy to this people. Now here,

1. God overrules the plea which he had offered in their favour, and shows him that it would not hold. In answer to it, he says, *Concerning this people, v. 10.* He does not say, *Concerning my people*, for he disowns them, because they had broken covenant with him. It is true, they were *called by his name*, and had the tokens of his presence among them; but they had sinned, and provoked God to withdraw. This the prophet had owned, and hoped to obtain mercy for them, notwithstanding this, through intercession and sacrifice; therefore God here tells him,

1. That they were not duly qualified for a pardon. The prophet had owned that *their backslidings were many*; and though they were so, yet there was hopes for them if they returned; but they show no disposition at all to *return*; they have wandered, and they have *loved to wander*; their backslidings have been their choice and their pleasure, which should have been their shame and pain, and therefore they will be their ruin. They cannot expect God should take up his rest with them, when they take such delight in going astray from him after their idols. It is not through necessity or inadvertency that they *wander*, but they *love it*. Sinners are wanderers from God; their wanderings forfeit God's favour, but it is their *loving* to wander, that quite cuts them off from it. They were told what their wanderings would come to, that one sin would hurry them on to another, and all to ruin; and yet they have not taken warning, and *refrained their feet*. So far were they from returning to their God, that neither his prophets nor his judgments could prevail with them to give themselves the least check in a sinful pursuit. This is that for which God is now reckoning with them; when he denies them rain from heaven, he is *remembering their iniquity and visiting their sins*; that is it for which their *fruitful land* is thus *turned into barrenness*.

2. That they had no reason to expect that the God they had rejected should accept them; no, not though they betook themselves to fasting and prayer, and put themselves to the expense of burnt-offerings and sacrifice; *The Lord doth not accept them, v. 10.* He takes no pleasure in them; (so the word is;) for what pleasure can the holy God take in those that take pleasure in his rivals, in any service, in any society, rather than his? *When they fast, (v. 12.)* which is a proper expression of repentance and reformation; *when they offer a burnt-offering and an oblation*, which was designed to be an expression of faith in a Mediator; though their prayers be thus enforced, and offered up in those vehicles that used to be acceptable, yet, because

they do not proceed from humble, penitent, and renewed hearts, but still they *love to wander*, therefore *I will not hear their cry*, be it ever so loud; *nor will I accept them*, either their persons, or their performances. It had been long since declared, *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord*; and those only are *accepted that do well*, Gen. iv. 7.

3. That they had forfeited all benefit by the prophet's prayers for them, because they had not regarded his preaching to them. This is the meaning of that repeated prohibition given to the prophet, (v. 11.) *Pray not thou for this people for their good*, as before, ch. xi. 14.—vii. 16. This did not forbid him thus to express his *good will* to them, (Moses continued to intercede for Israel, after God had said, *Let me alone*, Exod. xxxiii. 10.) but it forbade them to expect any *good effect* from it, as long as they *turned away their ear from hearing the law*. Thus was the doom of the impenitent ratified, as that of Saul's rejection was by that word to Samuel, *When wilt thou cease to mourn for Saul?* It therefore follows, (v. 12.) *I will consume them*, not only by this *famine*, but by the further sore judgments of *sword and pestilence*; for God has many arrows in his quiver, and those that will not be convinced and reclaimed by one, shall be consumed by another.

11. The prophet offers another plea, in excuse for the people's obstinacy, and it is but an excuse, but he was willing to say whatever their case would bear; it is this, That the prophets, who pretended a commission from heaven, imposed upon them, and flattered them with assurances of peace, though they went on in their sinful way, v. 13. He speaks of it with lamentation, "*Ah, Lord God, the poor people seem willing to take notice of what comes in thy name, and there are those who in thy name tell them that they shall not see the sword or famine; and they say it as from thee, with all the gravity and confidence of prophets, I will continue you in this place, and will give you assured peace here, peace of truth; I tell them the contrary, but I am one against many, and every one is apt to credit that which makes for them; therefore, Lord, pity and spare them, for their leaders cause them to err.*" This excuse had been of some weight if they had not had warning given them before, of false prophets, and rules by which to discover them; so that if they were deceived, it was entirely their own fault. But this teaches us, as far as we can with truth, to *make the best of bad*, and judge as charitably of others as their case will bear.

III. God not only overrules this, but condemns both the blind leaders and the blind followers to fall together into the ditch.

1. God disowns the flatteries; (v. 14.) *They prophesy lies in my name*. They had no commission from God to prophesy at all; *I neither sent them, nor commanded them, nor spake unto them*. They never were employed to go on any errand at all from God, he never made himself known to them, much less by them to the people; never any word of the Lord came to them, no call, no warrant, no instruction, much less did he send them on this errand, to rock them asleep in security. No; men may flatter themselves, and Satan may flatter them, but God never does. It is a *false vision*, and a *thing of naught*. Note, What is false and groundless is vain and worthless. The vision that is not true, be it ever so pleasing, is *good for nothing*; it is the *deceit of their heart*, a spider's web spun out of their own bowels, and in it they think to shelter themselves, but it will be swept away in a moment, and prove a great cheat. They that oppose their own thoughts to God's word, (God indeed says so, but they think otherwise,) walk in the *deceit of their heart*, and it will be their ruin.

2. He passes sentence upon the flatterers, v. 15. As for the prophets who put this abuse upon the people, by telling them they shall have peace, and this affront upon God by telling them so in God's name; let them know that they shall have no peace themselves. They shall fall first by those very judgments which they have flattered others with the hopes of an exemption from. They undertook to warrant people, that *sword and famine* should *not be in the land*; but it shall soon appear how little their warrants are good for, when they themselves shall be cut off by *sword and famine*. How should they secure others, or foretell peace to them, when they cannot secure themselves, nor have such a foresight of their own calamities, as to get out of the way of them. Note, The sorest punishments await those who promise sinners impunity in their sinful ways.

3. He lays the flattered under the same doom, v. 16. The *people to whom they prophesy lies*, and who willingly suffer themselves to be thus imposed upon, they shall *die by sword and famine*. Note, The unbelief of the deceived, with all the falsehood of the deceivers, shall not make the divine threatenings of no effect; *sword and famine* will come, whatever they say to the contrary; and those will be least safe that are most secure. Impenitent sinners will not escape the damnation of hell, by saying that they can never believe there is such a thing; but will *feel* what they will not *fear*. It is threatened that this people shall not only fall by *sword and famine*, but that they shall be as it were hanged up in chains, as monuments of that divine justice which they set at defiance; their bodies shall be *cast out, even in the streets of Jerusalem*, which of all places, one would think, should be kept clear from such nuisances: there they shall lie *unburied*; their nearest relations, who should do them that last office of love, being either so poor that they cannot afford it, or so weakened with hunger that they are not able to attend it, or so overwhelmed with grief, that they have no heart to it, or so destitute of natural affection, that they will not pay them so much respect. Thus will God *pour their wickedness upon them*, the punishment of their wickedness; the full vials of God's wrath shall be poured on them, to which they have made themselves obnoxious. Note, When sinners are overwhelmed with trouble, they must in it see their own wickedness poured upon them. This refers to the wickedness both of the false prophets and of the people; the blind lead the blind, and both fall together into the ditch, where they will be miserable comforters one to another.

17. Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them, Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow. 18. If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with the sword! and if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine! yea, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not. 19. Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us! we looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble! 20

We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedness, *and* the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against thee. 21. Do not abhor *us*, for thy name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us. 22. Are there *any* among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? *Art* not thou he, O LORD our God: therefore we will wait upon thee; for thou hast made all these things.

The present deplorable state of Judah and Jerusalem is here made the matter of the prophet's lamentation, (v. 17, 18.) and the occasion of his prayer and intercession for them; (v. 19.) and I am willing to hope that the latter, as well as the former, was by divine direction, and that these words, (v. 17.) *Thus shalt thou say unto them, (or concerning them, or in their hearing,)* refer to the intercession, as well as to the lamentation, and then it amounts to a revocation of the directions given to the prophet not to pray for them, v. 11. However, it is plain, by the prayers we find in these verses, that the prophet did not understand it as a prohibition, but only as a discouragement, like that, 1 John v. 16. *I do not say he shall pray for that.* Here,

I. The prophet stands weeping over the ruins of his country; God directs him to do so, that, showing himself affected, he might, if possible, affect them with the foresight of the calamities that were coming upon them. Jeremiah must say it not only to himself, but to *them* too; *Let mine eyes run down with tears*, v. 17. Thus he must signify to them, that he certainly foresaw the sword coming, and another sort of *famine*, more grievous even than this which they were now groaning under; this was in the country for want of rain, that in the city through the straitness of the siege. The prophet speaks as if he already saw the miseries attending the descent which the Chaldeans made upon them; *The virgin daughter of my people*, that is as dear to me as a daughter to her father, *is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow*, much greater and more grievous than any she has yet sustained; for, (v. 18.) *in the field* multitudes lie dead that were slain by the sword, and in the city multitudes lie dying for want of food. Doleful spectacles! The prophets and the priests, the false prophets that flattered them with their lies, and the wicked priests that persecuted the true prophets, these are now expelled their country, and go about either as prisoners and captives, whithersoever their conquerors lead them, or as fugitives and vagabonds, wherever they can find shelter and relief, *in a land that they know not*. Some understand it of the true prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel, that were carried to Babylon with the rest. The prophet's eyes must run down *with tears day and night*, in prospect of this, that the people might be convinced, not only that this woful day would infallibly come, and would be a very woful day indeed, but that he was far from desiring it, and would as gladly have brought them messages of peace as their false prophets, if he might have had warrant from heaven to do it. Note, Because God, though he inflicts death on sinners, yet delights not in it, it becomes his ministers, though in his name they pronounce the death of sinners, yet sadly to lament it.

II. He stands up to make intercession for them; for who knows but God will yet return and repent? While there is life, there is hope, and room for prayer. And though there were many among

them, who neither prayed themselves, nor valued the prophet's prayers, yet there were some who were better affected, would join with him in his devotions, and set the seal of their *Amen* to them.

1. He humbly expostulates with God concerning the present deplorable state of their case, v. 19. It was very sad, for, (1.) Their expectations from their God failed them; they thought he had *avouched* Judah to be *his*, but now, it seems, he has *utterly rejected* it, and cast it off; will not own any relation to it, or concern for it. However, they thought Zion was the beloved of his soul, was his rest forever; but now *his soul even loathes Zion*, loathes even the services there performed, for the sake of the sins there committed. (2.) Then no marvel that all their other expectations failed them; *They were smitten*, and their wounds were multiplied, but there was *no healing* for them; they *looked for peace*, because after a storm there usually comes a calm, and fair weather after a long fit of wet; but *there was no good*, things went still worse and worse. They looked for a *healing time*, but could not gain so much as a *breathing time*; "*Behold, trouble at the door, by which we hoped peace would enter. And is it so then? Hast thou indeed rejected Judah? Justly thou mightest. Has thy soul loathed Zion? We deserve it should. But wilt thou not at length in wrath remember mercy?*"

2. He makes a penitent confession of sin, speaking that language which they all should have spoken, though but few did; (v. 20.) "*We acknowledge our wickedness*, the abounding wickedness of our land, *and the iniquity of our fathers*, which we have imitated, and therefore justly smart for. *We know, we acknowledge, that we have sinned against thee*, and therefore thou art just in all that is brought upon us; but, because we confess our sins, we hope to find thee faithful and just in forgiving our sins."

3. He deprecates God's displeasure, and by faith appeals to his honour and promise, v. 21. His petition is, "*Do not abhor us*; though thou afflict us, *do not abhor us*; though thy hand be turned against us, let not thy heart be so, nor let thy mind be alienated from us." They own God might justly *abhor* them, they had rendered themselves *odious* in his eyes; yet when they pray, *Do not abhor us*, they mean, "*Receive us into favour again. Let not thy soul loathe Zion*," v. 19. Let not our incense be our abomination." They appeal, (1.) To the honour of God, the honour of *his scriptures*, by which he has *made himself known*; his *word*, which he has *magnified above all his name*; "*Do not abhor us for thy name's sake*, that name of thine by which we are called, and which we call upon." The honour of *his sanctuary* is pleaded; "*Lord, do not abhor us, for that will disgrace the throne of thy glory*," (the temple, which is called a *glorious high throne from the beginning*, ch. xvii. 12.) let not that which has been the *joy of the whole earth*, be made a *hissing* and an *astonishment*; we deserve to have *disgrace* put upon us, but let it not be so as to reflect upon thyself; let not the desolations of the temple give occasion to the heathen to reproach him that used to be worshipped there, as if he could not, or would not, protect it, or as if the gods of the Chaldeans had been too hard for him. Note, Good men lay the credit of religion, and its profession in the world, nearer their hearts than any private interest or concern of their own; and those are powerful pleas in prayer, which are fetched from thence, and great supports to faith. We may be sure that God will not *disgrace the throne of his glory*, on earth; nor will he eclipse the glory of his throne by one providence, without soon making it shine forth, and more brightly than before, by another. God will be no loser in his honour at the long run. (2.) To the promise of God; if this they are humbly bold

to put him in mind; *Remember thy covenant with us, and break not that covenant.* Not that they had any distrust of his fidelity, or that they thought he needed to be put in mind of his promise to them, but what he had said he would plead with himself, they take the liberty to plead with him; *Then will I remember my covenant*, Lev. xxvi. 42.

4. He professed a dependence upon God for the mercy of rain, which they were now in want of, v. 22. If they have forfeited their interest in him as their God in covenant, yet they will not let go their hold on him as the God of nature. (1.) They will never make their application to the idols of the heathen, for that would be foolish and fruitless; *Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that cause rain?* No, in a time of great drought in Israel, Bala, though all Israel was at his devotion in the days of Ahab, could not relieve them; it was that God only, who *answered by fire*, that could answer *by water* too. (2.) They will not terminate their regards in second causes, nor expect supply from nature only; *Can the heavens give showers?* No, not without orders from the God of heaven: for it is he that has the key of the clouds, that *opens the bottles of heaven, and waters the earth from his chambers.* But, (3.) All their expectation therefore is from him, and their confidence in him; *"Art not thou he, O Lord our God, from whom we may expect succour, and to whom we must apply ourselves? Art thou not he that causeth rain, and givest showers?"* For *thou hast made all these things*; thou gavest them being, and therefore thou givest them law, and hast them all at thy command; thou madest that moisture in nature, which is in a constant circulation, to serve the intentions of Providence, and thou directest it, and makest what use thou pleasest of it; *therefore we will wait upon thee, and upon thee only*; we will ask of the Lord rain, Zech. x. 1. We will trust in him to give it us in due time, and be willing to tarry his time; it is fit that we should, and it will not be in vain to do so." Note, The sovereignty of God should engage, and his all-sufficiency encourage, our attendance on him, and our expectations from him, at all times.

CHAP. XV.

When we left the prophet, in the close of the foregoing chapter, so pathetically pouring out his prayers before God, we had reason to hope that in this chapter we should find God reconciled to the land, and the prophet brought into a quiet, composed frame: but, to our great surprise, we find it much otherwise as to both. I. Notwithstanding the prophet's prayers, God here ratifies the sentence given against the people, and abandons them to ruin, turning a deaf ear to all the intercessions made for them, v. 1. 9. II. The prophet himself, notwithstanding the satisfaction he had in communion with God, still finds himself uneasy and out of temper. 1. He complains to God of his continual struggle with his persecutors, v. 10. 2. God assures him that he shall be taken under special protection, though there was a general desolation coming upon the land, v. 11. 14. 3. He appeals to God concerning his sincerity in the discharge of his prophetic office, and thinks it hard that he should not have more of the comfort of it, v. 15. 18. 4. Fresh security is given him, that upon condition he continue faithful, God will continue his care of him and his favour to him, v. 19. 21. And thus, at length, we hope he regained the possession of his own soul.

1. **THEN** said the LORD unto me, *Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people; cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.* 2. And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, *Whither shall we go forth?* then thou shalt tell them, *Thus saith the Lord, Such as are for death,*

to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity. 3. And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the LORD; the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy. 4. And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem. 5. For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest? 6. Thou hast forsaken me, saith the LORD, thou art gone backward; therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting. 7. And I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land; I will bereave them of children. I will destroy my people, *since* they return not from their ways. 8. Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the seas: I have brought upon them, against the mother of the young men, a spoiler at noon-day; I have caused him to fall upon it suddenly, and terrors upon the city. 9. She that hath borne seven languisheth; she hath given up the ghost; her sun is gone down while it was yet day; she hath been ashamed and confounded: and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, saith the LORD.

We scarcely find any where more pathetic expressions of divine wrath against a provoking people than we have here in these verses. The prophet had prayed earnestly for them, and found some among them to join with him; and yet not so much as a reprieve was gained, or the least mitigation of the judgment; but this answer is given to the prophet's prayers, that the decree was gone forth, was irreversible, and would shortly be executed. Observe here,

I. What the sin was, upon which this severe sentence was grounded. 1. It is in remembrance of a former iniquity; it is because of Manasseh, for that which he did in Jerusalem, v. 4. What that was, we are told, and that it was for it that Jerusalem was destroyed, 2 Kings xxiv. 3, 4. It was for his idolatry, and the innocent blood which he shed, which the Lord would not pardon. He is called the son of Hezekiah, because his relation to so good a father was a great aggravation of his sin, so far was it from being an excuse of it. The greatest part of a generation was worn off since Manasseh's time, yet his sin is brought into the account; as in Jerusalem's last ruin God brought upon it all the righteous blood shed on the earth, to show how heavy the guilt of blood will light and lie somewhere, sooner or later, and that reprieves are not pardons. It is in consideration of their present impenitence. See how their sin is described; (v. 6.) *"Thou hast forsaken me, my services and thy duty to me; thou art gone backward into the ways of contradiction, art become the reverse of what thou*

shouldst have been, and of what God by this law would have led thee forward to." See how the impentence is described; (*v. 7.*) *They return not from their ways*, the ways of their own hearts, into the ways of God's commandments again. There is mercy for those who have turned aside, if they will return; but what favour can they expect, that persist in their apostasy?

II. What the sentence is. It is such as denotes no less than an utter ruin.

1. God himself abandons and abhors them; *My mind cannot be toward them*. How can it be thought that the holy God should have any remaining complacency in those that have such a rooted antipathy to him? It is not in a passion, but with a just and holy indignation, that he says, "*Cast them out of my sight*, as that which is in the highest degree odious and offensive; and *let them go forth*, for I will be troubled with them no more."

2. He will not admit of any intercession to be made for them; (*v. 1.*) "*Though Moses and Samuel stood before me*, by prayer or sacrifice to reconcile me to them, yet I could not be prevailed with to admit them into favour." Moses and Samuel were two as great favourites of Heaven, as ever were the blessings of this earth, and were particularly famed for the success of their mediation between God and his offending people; many a time they had been destroyed, if Moses had not stood before him in the breach; and to Samuel's prayers they owed their lives; (1 Sam. xii. 19.) yet even their intercessions should not prevail, no, not though they were now in a state of perfection, much less Jeremiah's, who was now *subject to like passions* as others. The putting of this as a case, *Though they should stand before me*, supposes that they *do not*, and is an intimation that saints in heaven are not intercessors for saints on earth. It is the prerogative of the Eternal Word, to be the only Mediator in the other world, whatever Moses and Samuel and others were in this.

3. He condemns them all to one destroying judgment or other. When God casts them out of his presence, *whither shall they go forth?* *v. 2.* Certainly no whither, to be safe or easy, but to be met by one judgment, while they are *pursued* by another, till they find themselves surrounded with mischiefs on all hands, so that they cannot escape; *Such as are for death, to death*. By death here is meant the pestilence, (*Rev. vi. 8.*) for it is *death* without visible means. *Such as are for death, to death, or for the sword, to the sword*; every man shall perish in that way that God has appointed: the law that appoints the malefactor's death, determines what death he shall die. Or, He that is by *his own choice* for this judgment, let him take it, or for *that*, let him take it, but by the one or the other they shall all fall, and none shall escape. It is a choice like that which David was *put to*, and was thereby put into a *great strait*, 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. *Captivity* is mentioned last, some think, because the sorest judgment of all, it being both a complication and continuance of miseries. That of the *sword* is again repeated, (*v. 3.*) and is made the first of another four frightful set of destroyers, which God will *appoint over them*, as officers over the soldiers to do what they please with them. As those that escape the *sword* shall be cut off by pestilence, famine, or captivity, so those that fall by the sword shall be cut off by divine vengeance, which pursues sinners on the other side death; *there shall be dogs to tear* in the city, and *fowls of the air and wild beasts* in the field to devour. And if there be any that think to outrun justice, they shall be made the most public monuments of it; *They shall be removed into all kingdoms of the earth*, (*v. 4.*) like Cain, who, that he might be

made a spectacle of horror to all, became a *fugitive and a vagabond* in the earth.

4. They shall fall without being relieved. Who can do any thing to help them? When (1.) God, even their own God, (so he had been,) appears against them; *I will stretch out my hand against thee*; which denotes a deliberate, determined stroke, which will reach far, and wound deep, *v. 6.* *I am weary of repenting*, it is a strange expression; they had behaved so provokingly, especially by their treacherous professions of repentance, that they had put even infinite patience itself to the stretch. God had often turned away his wrath, when it was ready to break forth against them; but now he will grant no more reprieves. Miserable is the case of those who have sinned so long against God's mercy, that at length they have sinned it away. (2.) Their own country expels them, and is ready to *spue them out*, as it had done the Canaanites that were before them; for so it was threatened, (*Lev. xviii. 28.*) *I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land*, in their own gates, through which they shall be scattered; or, *into the gates of the earth*, into the cities of all the nations about them. (3.) Their own children, that should assist them when they speak with the enemy in the gate, shall be cut off from them; (*v. 7.*) *I will bereave them of children*; so that they shall have little hopes that the next generation will retrieve their affairs, for *I will destroy my people*; and when the inhabitants are slain, the land will soon be desolate. This melancholy article is enlarged upon, *v. 8, 9.* where we have,

[1.] The destroyer brought upon them. When God has bloody work to do, he will find out bloody instruments to do it with. Nebuchadnezzar is here called a *spoiler at noon-day*; not a thief in the night that is afraid of being discovered, but one that without fear shall break through and destroy all the fences of rights and properties, and this in the face of the sun, and in defiance of its light; *I have brought against the mother, a young man, a spoiler*; (so some read it;) for Nebuchadnezzar, when he first invaded Judah, was but a *young man*, in the first year of his reign. We read it, *I have brought upon them, even against the mother of the young man, a spoiler*, against Jerusalem, a mother-city, that had a very numerous family of young men; or, that invasion was in a particular manner terrible to those mothers who had many sons fit for war, who must now jeopard their lives in the high places of the field: and, being an unequal match for the enemy, would be likely to fall there, to the inexpressible grief of their poor mothers, who had nursed them up with a deal of tenderness. The same God that brought the spoiler upon them, *caused him to fall upon it*, upon the spoil delivered to him, *suddenly and by surprise*; and then *terrors* came upon the city. The original is very abrupt, *the city and terrors*. O the city, what a consternation will it then be in? O the terrors that shall then seize it! Then the *city and terrors* shall be brought together, that seemed at a distance from each other. *I will cause suddenly to fall upon her* (upon Jerusalem) *a watcher and terrors*; so Mr. Gataker reads it, for the word is used for a watcher, (*Dan. iv. 13, 23.*) and the Chaldean soldiers were called *watchers*, *ch. iv. 16.*

[2.] The destruction made by this destroyer. A dreadful slaughter is here described. *First*, The wives are deprived of their husbands; *Their widows are increased above the sand of the seas*, so numerous are they now grown. It was promised that the men of Israel (for those only were numbered) should be *as the sand of the sea for multitude*; but now they shall be cut off, and their widows shall be set. But observe, God says, *They are increased to me*. Though the husbands were cut off by the sword of his jus-

tice, their poor widows were gathered in the arms of his mercy, who has taken it among the titles of his honour to be the *God of the widows*. Widows are said to be *taken into the number*, the number of those whom God has a particular compassion and concern for. *Secondly*, The parents are deprived of their children; *She that has borne seven sons*, whom she expected to be the support and joy of her age, now *languishes*, when she has seen them all cut off by the sword in one day, who had been many years her burthen and care. *She that had many children is waxen feeble*, 1 Sam. ii. 5. See what uncertain comforts children are; and let us therefore rejoice in them, *as though we rejoiced not*. When the children are slain, the mother *gives up the ghost*, for her life was bound up in theirs: *Her sun is gone down while it was yet day*: she is bereaved of all her comforts then when she thought herself in the midst of the enjoyment of them. She is now *ashamed and confounded* to think how proud she had been of her sons, how fond of them, and how much she promised herself from them. Some understand by this *languishing mother*, Jerusalem lamenting the death of her inhabitants as passionately as ever poor mother bewailed her children. Many are cut off already, and the *residue of them*, who have yet escaped, and, as was hoped, were reserved to be the seed of another generation, even them *will I deliver to the sword before their enemies*, (as the condemned malefactor is delivered to the sheriff to be executed,) *saith the Lord*, the Judge of heaven and earth, who, we are sure, herein judges right, though the judgment seem severe.

5. They shall fall without being pitied; (v. 5.) *“For who shall have pity on thee, O Jerusalem? When thy God has cast thee out of his sight, and his compassions fail, and are shut up from thee, neither thine enemies nor thy friends shall have any compassion for thee. They shall have no sympathy with thee, they shall not bemoan thee, or be sorry for thee, they shall have no concern for thee, shall not go a step out of their way to ask how thou dost.”* For, (1.) Their friends, who were expected to do these friendly offices, were all involved with them in the calamities, and had enough to do to bemoan themselves. (2.) It was plain to all their neighbours, that they had brought all this misery upon themselves by their obstinacy in sin, and that they might have easily prevented it by repentance and reformation, which they were often in vain called to; and therefore *who can pity them? O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself*. Those will perish for ever unpitied, that might have been saved upon such easy terms, and would not. (3.) God will thus complete their misery, he will set their acquaintance, as he did Job's, at a distance from them; and his hand, his righteous hand, is to be acknowledged in all the unkindnesses of our friends, as well as in all the injuries done us by our foes.

10. *Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury: yet every one of them doth curse me.* 11. *The Lord said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant, verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction.* 12. *Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel? 13. Thy substance and thy treasures will I give to the spoil without price, and that for all thy sins, even in all thy borders.*

14. *And I will make thee to pass with thine enemies into a land which thou knowest not; for a fire is kindled in mine anger, which shall burn upon you.*

Jeremiah is now returned from his public work, and is retired into his closet; what passed between him and his God there, we have an account of in these and the following verses, which he published afterward, to affect the people with the weight and importance of his messages to them. Here is,

I. The complaint which the prophet makes to God of the many discouragements he met with in his work, v. 10.

1. He met with a great deal of contradiction and opposition. He was a *man of strife and contention to the whole land*; (so it might be read, rather than *to the whole earth*, for his business lay only in *that land*;) both city and country quarrelled with him, and set themselves against him, and said and did all they could to thwart him. He was a *peaceable* man, gave no provocation to any, nor was apt to resent the provocations given him, and yet a *man of strife*, not a man *striving*, but a man *striven with*; he was *for peace*, but, when he spake, they were *for war*. And, whatever they pretended, that which was the real cause of their quarrels with him, was, his faithfulness to God and to their souls. He showed them their sins that were working their ruin, and put them into a way to prevent that ruin, which was the greatest kindness he could do them; and yet this was it for which they were incensed against him, and looked upon him as their enemy. Even the Prince of peace himself was thus a *man of strife*, a sign spoken against, continually *enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself*. And the gospel of peace brings *division*, even to fire and sword, Matth. x. 34, 35. Luke xii. 49, 51. Now this made Jeremiah very uneasy, even to a degree of impatience; he cried out, *Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me*. As if it were his mother's fault, that she bore him, and he had better never have been born, than be born to such an uncomfortable life; nay, he is angry that she had *borne him a man of strife*; as if he had been fatally determined to this by the stars that were in the ascendant at his birth. If he had any meaning of this kind, doubtless it was very much his infirmity; we rather hope it was intended for no more than a pathetic lamentation of his own case. Note, (1.) Even those who are most quiet and peaceable, if they serve God faithfully, are often made *men of strife*. We can but *follow peace*; we have the making only of one side of the bargain, and therefore can but, *as much as in us lies*, live peaceably. (2.) It is very uncomfortable to those who are of a peaceable disposition, to live among those who are continually picking quarrels with them. (3.) Yet, if we cannot live so peaceably as we desire with our neighbours, we must not be so disturbed at it as thereby to lose the repose of our own minds, and put ourselves upon the fret.

2. He met with a great deal of contempt, contumely, and reproach. They every one of them *cursed him*; they branded him as a turbulent, factious man, as an incendiary, and a sower of discord and sedition. They ought to have *blessed* him, and to have blessed God for him; but they were arrived at such a pitch of enmity against God and his word, that for his sake they *cursed* his messenger, spoke ill of him, wished ill to him, did all they could to make him odious: they all did so, he had scarcely one friend in Judah or Jerusalem, that would give him a good word. Note. It is often the lot of the best of men to have the worst of characters ascribed to them; *So persecuted they the prophets*. But one would be apt to suspect that surely Jeremiah had given them some prove-

cation, else he could not have lost himself thus: no, not the least; I have neither *lent* money, nor *borrowed* money; have been neither *creditor* nor *debtor*; for so general is the signification of the words here. (1.) It is implied here, that those who deal much in the business of this world, are often involved thereby in strife and contention; *meum* and *tuum*—mine and thine are the great makebates, lenders and borrowers, sue and are sued, and great dealers often get a deal of ill-will. (2.) It was an instance of Jeremiah's great prudence, and it is written for our learning, that, being called to be a prophet, he *entangled not himself in the affairs of this life*, but kept clear from them, that he might apply himself the more closely to the business of his profession, and might not give the least shadow of suspicion that he aimed at secular advantages in it, nor any occasion to his neighbours to contend with him. He *put out* no money, for he was no usurer, nor indeed had he any money to lend: he *took up* no money, for he was no purchaser, no merchant, no spend-thrift. He was perfectly dead to this world, and the things of it: a very little served to keep him, and we find (*ch. xvi. 2.*) that he had neither wife nor children to keep. And yet, (3.) Though he behaved thus discreetly, and so as one would have thought should have gained him universal esteem, yet he lay under a general odium, through the iniquity of the times. Blessed be God, bad as things are with us, they are not *so bad*, but that there are those with whom virtue has its praise; yet let not those who behave most prudently, think it strange if they have not the respect and esteem they deserve. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

II. The answer which God gave to this complaint. Though there was in it a mixture of passion and infirmity, yet God graciously took cognizance of it, because it was *for his sake* that the prophet suffered reproach. In this answer,

1. God assures him that he should *weather the storm*, and be made *easy at last*, *v. 11.* Though his neighbours quarrelled with him for what he did in the discharge of his office, yet God accepted him, and promised to stand by him. It is in the original expressed in the form of an oath; *If I take not care of thee, let me never be counted faithful; verily, it shall go well with thy remnant*, with the remainder of thy life; for so the word signifies. The *residue* of thy days shall be more comfortable to thee than those hitherto have been. *Thy end shall be good*; so the Chaldee reads it. Note, It is a great and sufficient support to the people of God, that, how troublesome soever their way may be, it shall be well with them in their latter end; *Ps. xxxvii. 37.* They have still a *remnant*, a *residue*, something *behind*, and *left in reserve*, which will be sufficient to balance all their grievances, and the hope of it may serve to make them easy. It should seem that Jeremiah, besides the vexation that his people gave him, was uneasy at the apprehension he had of sharing largely in the public judgments which he foresaw coming; and though he mentioned not this, God replied to his thought of it, as to Moses, *Exod. iv. 19.* Jeremiah thought, "If my friends are thus abusive to me, what will my enemies be?" And God had thought fit to awaken in him an expectation of this kind, *ch. xii. 5.* But here he quiets his mind with this promise, "*Verily, I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil*, when all about thee shall be laid waste." Note, God has all men's hearts in his hand, and can turn those to favour his servants, whom they were most afraid of. And the prophets of the Lord have often met with fairer and better treatment among open enemies than among those that call themselves his people.

When we see trouble coming, and it looks very

threatening, let us not despair, but hope in God, because it may prove better than we expect. This promise was accomplished, when Nebuchadnezzar, having taken the city, charged the captain of the guard to be kind to Jeremiah, and let him have every thing he had a mind to, *ch. xxxix. 11, 12.* The following words, *Shall iron break the northern iron, and the steel, or brass?* (*v. 12.*) being compared with the promise of God made to Jeremiah, (*ch. i. 18.*) that he would make him an *iron pillar* and *brazen walls*, seem intended for his comfort. They were continually clashing with him, and were rough and hard *as iron*; but Jeremiah, being armed with power and courage from on high, is as *northern iron*, which is naturally stronger, and as *steel*, which is hardened by art; and therefore they shall not prevail against him; compare this with *Ezek. ii. 6—iii. 8, 9.* He might the better bear their quarrelling with him, when he was sure of the victory.

2. God assures him that his enemies and persecutors should be *lost in the storm*, should be ruined at last, and that therein the word of God in his mouth should be accomplished, and he proved a true prophet, *v. 13, 14.* God here turns his speech from the prophet to the people. To them also, *v. 12.* may be applied; *Shall iron break the northern iron, and the steel?* Shall their courage and strength, and the most hardy and vigorous of their efforts, be able to contest either with the counsel of God, or with the army of the Chaldeans, which are as inflexible, as invincible, as the *northern iron*, and the *steel*. Let them therefore hear their doom; *Thy substance and thy treasure will I give to the spoil, and that without price*; the spoilers shall have it *gratis*, it shall be to them a cheap and easy prey. Observe, The prophet was poor, he neither *lent* nor *borrowed*, he had nothing to lose, neither *substance nor treasure*, and therefore the enemy will treat him well, *Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator*—*The traveller that has no property about him, will congratulate himself, when accosted by a robber.* But the people that had great estates in money and land, would be slain for what they had, or the enemy, finding they had much, would use them hardly, to make them confess more. And it is their own iniquity that herein corrects them; *It is for all thy sins, even in all thy borders.* All parts of the country, even those which lay *most remote*, had contributed to the national guilt, and all shall now be brought to account. Let not one tribe lay the blame upon another, but each take shame to itself; *It is for all thy sins in all thy borders.* Thus shall they stay at home till they see their estates ruined, and then they shall be carried into captivity, to spend the sad remains of a miserable life in slavery: "*I will make thee to pass with thine enemies, who shall lead thee in triumph, into a land thou knowest not, and therefore canst expect to find no comfort in it.*" All this is the fruit of God's wrath: "*It is a fire kindled in mine anger, which shall burn upon you, and, if not extinguished in time, will burn eternally.*"

15. O LORD, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy long-suffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke. 16. Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts. 17. I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone, because

of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation: 18. Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, *which* refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, *and as waters that fail*? 19. Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, *and thou shalt stand before me*: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them. 20. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall; and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for *I am* with thee to save thee, and to deliver thee, saith the LORD. 21. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.

Here, as before, we have,

I. The prophet's humble address to God, containing a representation both of his integrity, and of the hardships he underwent notwithstanding. It is matter of comfort to us, that whatever ails us, we have a God to go to, before whom we may spread our case, and to whose omniscience we may appeal, as the prophet here, "*O Lord, thou knowest*: thou knowest my sincerity, which men are resolved they will not acknowledge; thou knowest my distress, which men disdain to take notice of." Observe here,

1. What it is that the prophet prays for, v. 15. (1.) That God would consider his case, and be mindful of him; "*O Lord, remember me*; think up'n me for good." (2.) That God would communicate strength and comfort to him; "*Visit me*; not only remember me, but let me know that thou rememberest me, that thou art nigh unto me." (3.) That he would appear for him against those that did him wrong; "*Revenge me of my persecutors*, or, rather, "*Vindicate me from my persecutors*; give judgment against them, and let that judgment be executed so far as is necessary for my vindication, and to compel them to acknowledge that they have done me wrong." Further than this, a good man will not desire that God would revenge him. Let something be done to convince the world that (what ever blasphemers say to the contrary) Jeremiah is a *righteous man*, and the God whom he serves is a *righteous God*. (4.) That he would yet spare him and continue him in the land of the living; "*Take me not away* by a sudden stroke, but in *thy long-suffering* lengthen out my days." The best men will own themselves so obnoxious to God's wrath, that they are indebted to his patience for the continuance of their lives. Or, "*While thou exercise long-suffering toward my persecutors*, let not them prevail to *take me away*." Though in compassion he complained of his birth, (v. 10.) yet he desires here that his death might not be hastened; for *life is sweet* to nature; the life of a useful man is so to grace. *I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world*.

2. What it is that he pleads with God for, mercy and relief against his enemies, persecutors, and slanderers.

(1.) That God's honour was interested in his case; *Know*, and make it known, *that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke*. Those that lay themselves open to reproach by their own fault and folly, have great reason to bear it patiently, but no reason to expect that God should appear for them. But if it is for doing well that we suffer ill, and for *righteousness*'

sake that we have all manner of evil said against us, we may hope that God will vindicate *our* honour with *his own*. To the same purport, (v. 16.) *I am called by thy name, O Lord of hosts*; it was for that reason that his enemies hated him, and therefore for that reason he promised himself that God would own him, and stand by him.

(2.) That the word of God, which he was employed to preach to others, he had experienced the power and pleasure of in his own soul, and therefore had the graces of the Spirit to qualify him for the divine favour, as well as his gifts. We find some rejected of God, who yet could say, *Lord, we have prophesied in thy name*. But Jeremiah could say more, (v. 16.) "*Thy words were found, found by me*;" (he searched the scriptures, diligently studied the law, and found that in it which was reviving to him. If we *seek*, we shall find;) "*found for me*;" (the words which he was to deliver to others, were laid ready to his hand, were brought to him by inspiration;) "*and I did not only taste them, but eat them*, received them entirely, conversed with them intimately; they were welcome to me, as food to one that is hungry; I entertained them, digested them, turned them in *succum et sanguinem*—into blood and spirits, and was myself delivered into the mould of those truths which I was to deliver to others." The prophet was bid to *eat the roll*, Ezek. ii. 8. Rev. x. 9. *I did eat it*, that is, as it follows, it was *to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart*, nothing could be more agreeable. Understand it, [1.] Of the message itself which he was to deliver. Though he was to foretell the ruin of his country, which was dear to him, and in the ruin of which he could not but have a deep share, yet all natural affections were swallowed up in zeal for God's glory, and even these messages of wrath, being divine messages, were a satisfaction to him. He also *rejoiced*, at first, in hope that the people would take warning, and prevent the judgment. Or, [2.] Of the commission he received to deliver this message. Though the work he was called to was not attended with any secular advantages, but, on the contrary, exposed him to contempt and persecution, yet, because it put him in a way to serve God, and do good, he took pleasure in it, was glad to be so employed, and it was his *meat and drink to do the will of him that sent him*, John iv. 34. Or, [3.] Of the promise God gave him, that he would assist and own him in his work; (*ch. i. 8.*) he was satisfied in that, and depended upon it, and therefore hoped it should not fail him.

(3.) That he had applied himself to the discharge of his office with all possible gravity, seriousness, and self-denial, though he had had of late but little satisfaction in it, v. 17. [1.] It was his *comfort*, that he had given up himself wholly to the business of his office, and had done nothing inconsistent with it; nothing either to *divert* himself from it, or *disfit* himself for it. He kept no unsuitable company, denied himself the use even of lawful recreations, abstained from every thing that looked like levity, lest thereby he should make himself mean and less regarded. He *sat alone*, spent a deal of time in his closet, *because of the hand of the Lord* that was strong upon him to carry him on in his work, Ezek. iii. 14. "*For thou hast filled me with indignation*, with such messages of wrath against this people, as have made me always pensive." It will be a comfort to God's ministers, when men despise them, if they have the testimonies of their consciences for them, that they have not by any vain, foolish behaviour, made themselves despicable; that they have been dead not only to the wealth of the world, as this prophet was, (v. 10.) but to the pleasures of it too, as here. But, [2.] It is his *complaint*, that he had had but little pleasure in his work. It was at first the

rejoicing of his heart, but of late it had made him melancholy; so that he had no heart to *sit in the meeting of those that make merry*; he cared not for company, for indeed no company cared for him; he *sat alone*, fretting at the people's obstinacy, and the little success of his labours among them; this filled him with a holy *indignation*. Note, It is the folly and infirmity of some good people, that they lose much of the pleasantness of their religion by the fretfulness and uneasiness of their natural temper, which they humour and indulge, instead of mortifying it.

(4.) He throws himself upon God's pity and promise in a very passionate expostulation; (v. 18.) "*Why is my pain perpetual, and nothing done to ease it? Why are the wounds which my enemies are continually giving both to my peace and to my reputation, incurable, and nothing done to retrieve either my comfort or my credit? I once little thought that I should have been thus neglected; will the God that has promised me his presence, be to me as a liar; the God on whom I depend, be to me as waters that fail?*" We are willing to make the best we can of it, and to take it as an appeal, [1.] To the mercy of God; "*I know he will not let the pain of his servant be perpetual, but he will ease it, will not let his wound be incurable, but he will heal it, and therefore I will not despair.*" [2.] To his faithfulness; "*Will thou be to me as a liar? No, I know thou wilt not; God is not a man that he should lie. The Fountain of life will never be to his people as waters that fail.*"

II. God's gracious answer to this address, v. 19.—21. Though the prophet betrayed much human frailty in his address, yet God vouchsafed to answer him with good words and comfortable words; for he knows our frame. Observe,

1. What God here requires of him as the condition of the further favours he designed him. Jeremiah had done and suffered much for God, yet God no Debtor to him, but he is still upon his good behaviour. God will own him. But,

(1.) He must recover his temper, and be reconciled to his work, and friends with it again, and not quarrel with it any more as he had done. He must *return*; must shake off these distrustful, discontented thoughts and passions, and not give way to them, must regain the peaceable possession and enjoyment of himself, and resolve to be easy. Note, When we have stepped aside into any disagreeable frame or way, our care must be to *return*, and compose ourselves into a right temper of mind again; and then we may expect God will help us, if thus we endeavour to help ourselves.

(2.) He must resolve to be faithful in his work, for he could not expect the divine protection any longer than he did approve himself so. Though there was no cause at all to charge Jeremiah with unfaithfulness, and God knew his heart to be sincere, yet God saw fit to give him this caution. Those that do their duty must not take it ill to be told their duty. In two things he must be faithful.

[1.] He must distinguish between some and others of those he preached to; Thou must *take forth the precious from the vile*. The righteous are the *precious*, be they ever so mean and poor, the wicked are the *vile*, be they ever so rich and great. In our congregations these are *mixed*, wheat and chaff in the same floor; we cannot distinguish them by name, but we must by character, and must give to each a portion, speaking comfort to *precious* saints, and terror to *vile* sinners; neither *making the heart of the righteous sad, nor strengthening the hands of the wicked*, (Ezek. xiii. 22.) but *rightly dividing the word of truth*. Ministers must take those whom they see to be *precious*, into their bosoms, and not sit alone as Jeremiah did, but keep up conversation with those they may do good to, and get good by.

[2.] He must closely adhere to his instructions, and not in the least vary from them; *Let them return to thee, but return not thou to them*. That is, he must do the utmost he can, in his preaching, to bring people up to the mind of God; he must tell them they must, at their peril, comply with that. They that had flown off from him, that did not like the terms upon which God's favour was offered to them, "*Let them return to thee*, and, upon second thoughts, come up to the terms, and strike the bargain; but do not thou *return to them*, do not compliment them, or comply with them, or think to make the matter easier to them than the word of God has made it." Men's hearts and lives must come up to God's law, and comply with that, for God's law will never come down to them, or comply with them.

2. What he here promises them, upon the performance of these conditions. If he approve himself well,

(1.) God will quiet his mind, and pacify the present tumult of his spirits; *If thou return, I will bring thee again; will restore thy soul*, as Ps. xxiii. 3. The best and strongest saints, if at any time they have gone aside out of the right way, and are determined to *return*, need the grace of God to *bring them again*.

(2.) God will employ him in his service as a prophet, whose work, even in those bad times, had comfort and honour enough in it to be its own wages; "*Thou shalt stand before me, to receive instructions from me, as a servant from his master; and thou shalt be as my mouth to deliver my messages to the people, as an ambassador is the mouth of the prince that sends him.*" Note, Faithful ministers are God's *mouth* to us; they are so to look upon themselves, and to speak God's mind, and *as becomes the oracles of God*; and we are so to look upon them, and to hear God speaking to us by them. Observe, If thou keep close to thine instructions, *thou shalt be as my mouth*, not otherwise; so far and no further, God will stand by ministers, as they go by the written word; "*Thou shalt be as my mouth*, what thou savest shall be made good, as if I myself had said it." See Isa. xlv. 26. 1 Sam. iii. 19.

(3.) He shall have strength and courage to face the difficulties he meets with in his work, and his spirit shall not fail again, as now it does; (v. 20.) "*I will make thee unto this people as a fenced brazen wall*, which the storm batters and beats violently upon, but cannot shake. *Return not thou to them*, by any sinful compliances, and then trust thy God to arm thee by his grace with holy resolutions. Be not cowardly, and God will make thee daring." He had complained that he was made a *man of strife*; "*Expect (says God) that they will fight against thee; they will still continue their opposition, but they shall not prevail against thee, to drive thee off from thy work, or to cut thee off from the land of the living.*"

(4.) He shall have God for his Protector and mighty Deliverer; *I am with thee, to save thee*. Those that have God with them, have a Saviour with them, who has wisdom and strength enough to deal with the most formidable enemy; and those that are *with God* and faithful to him, he will *deliver*, (v. 21.) either from trouble or through it. They may perhaps fall *into the hand of the wicked*, and they may appear *terrible* to them, but God will rescue them *out of their hands*. They shall not be able to kill them, till they have finished their testimony; they shall not prevent their happiness. God will so *deliver them as to preserve them to his heavenly kingdom*, (2 Tim. iv. 18.) and that is deliverance enough. There are many things that appear very *frightful*, that yet do not prove at all *hurtful*, to a good man.

CHAP. XVI.

In this chapter, 1. The greatness of the calamity that was coming upon the Jewish nation, is illustrated by prohibitions given to the prophet, neither to set up a house of his own, (v. 1..4.) nor to go into the house of mourning, (v. 5..7.) or into the house of feasting, v. 8, 9. II. God is justified in these severe proceedings against them, by an account of their great wickedness, v. 10..13. III. An intimation is given of mercy in reserve, v. 14, 15. IV. Some hopes are given that the punishment of the sin should prove the reformation of the sinners, and that they should return to God at length in a way of duty, and so be qualified for his returns to them in a way of favour, v. 16..21.

1. **T**HE word of the LORD came also unto me, saying, 2. Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons nor daughters in this place. 3. For thus saith the LORD concerning the sons, and concerning the daughters *that are born in this place*, and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land; 4. They shall die of grievous deaths: they shall not be lamented, neither shall they be buried; *but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.* 5. For thus saith the LORD, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them, for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the LORD, *even loving-kindness and mercies.* 6. Both the great and the small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall *men* lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them: 7. Neither shall *men* tear themselves for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead; neither shall *men* give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother. 8. Thou shalt not also go into the house of feasting, to sit with them to eat and to drink. 9. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place in your eyes, and in your days, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride.

The prophet is here for a *sign* to the people; they would not regard what he *said*, let it be tried whether they will regard what he *does*. In general, he must conduct himself so, in every thing, as became one that expected to see his country in ruins very shortly. This he foretold, but few regarded the prediction; therefore he is to show that he is himself fully satisfied in the truth of it. Others go on in their usual course, but he, in the prospect of these sad times, is forbidden, and therefore forbears, marriage, mourning for the dead, and mirth. Note, Those that would convince others of, and affect them with, the word of God, must make it appear, even in the most self-denying instances, that they do believe it themselves, and are affected with it.

If we would rouse others out of their security, and persuade them to sit loose to the world, we must ourselves be mortified to present things, and show that we expect the dissolution of them.

1. Jeremiah must not marry, nor think of having a family, and being a housekeeper; (v. 2.) *Thou shalt not take thee a wife*, nor think of *having sons and daughters in this place*, not in the land of Judah, not in Jerusalem, not in Anathoth. The Jews, more than any people, valued themselves on their early marriages, and their numerous offspring. But Jeremiah must live a bachelor, not so much in *honour* of virginity, as in *diminution* of it; by this it appears that it was *advisable and seasonable* only in calamitous times, and times of *present distress*, 1 Cor. vii. 26. That it is so, is a part of the calamity. There may be a time when it will be said, *Blessed is the womb that bare not*, Luke xxiii. 29. When we see such times at hand, it is wisdom for all, especially for prophets, to keep themselves as much as may be from being *entangled with the affairs of this life*, and encumbered with that which, the dearer it is to them, the more it will be the matter of their care, and fear, and grief, at such a time. The reason here given, is, because the *fathers and mothers, the sons and the daughters*, shall die of *grievous deaths*, v. 3, 4. As for those that have wives and children, (1.) They will have such a clog upon them, that they cannot *flee from those deaths*. A single man may make his escape, and shift for his own safety, when he that has a wife and children, can neither find means to convey them with him, nor find in his heart to go and leave them behind him. (2.) They will be in continual terror for fear of those deaths; and the more they have to lose by them, the greater will the terror and consternation be, when death appears every where in its triumphant pomp and power. (3.) The death of every child, and the aggravating circumstances of it, will be a new death to the parent. Better have no children than have them brought forth, and bred up, *for the murderer*, (Hos ix. 13, 14.) than see them live and die in misery. Death is *grievous*, but some deaths are more *grievous* than others, both to them that die and to their relations that survive them: hence we read of *so great a death*, 2 Cor. i. 10. Two things are used a little to palliate and alleviate the terror of death, as to this world, and to sugar the bitter pill; bemoaning the dead, and burying them; but to make those deaths *grievous* indeed, these are denied; *They shall not be lamented*, but shall be carried off, as if all the world were weary of them; nay, they shall *not be buried*, but left exposed, as if they were designed to be monuments of justice. They shall be *as dung upon the face of the earth*, not only despicable, but detestable, as if they were good for nothing but to manure the ground; being *consumed*, some *by the sword*, and some *by famine*, *their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and the beasts of the earth*. Will not any one say, "Better be without children, than live to see them come to this." What reason have we to say, *all is vanity and vexation of spirit*, when those creatures that we expect to be our greatest comforts, may prove not only our heaviest cares, but our sorest crosses!

2. Jeremiah must not go to the *house of mourning*, upon occasion of the death of any of his neighbours or relations; (v. 5.) *Enter thou not into the house of mourning*. It was usual to condole with those whose relations were dead, to *bemoan them*, to *cut themselves*, and *make themselves bald*, which, it seems, was commonly practised, as an expression of mourning, though forbidden by the law, Deut. xiv. 1. Nay, sometimes, in a passion of grief, they *tare themselves for them*; (v. 6, 7.) partly in honour of the deceased, thus signifying that they thought

there was a great loss of them; and partly, in compassion to the surviving relations, to whom the burthen will be made the lighter, by their having sharers with them in their grief. They used to *mourn with them*, and so to *comfort them for the dead*, as Job's friends with him, and the Jews with Martha and Mary; and it was a friendly office to give them *a cup of consolation to drink*, to provide cordials for them, and press them earnestly to drink of them for the support of their spirits; give wine to them that are of heavy heart, *for their father or mother*, that it may be some comfort to them to find that, though they have lost their parents, yet they have some friends left, that have a concern for them. Thus the usage stood, and it was a laudable usage; it is a *good work* to others, as well as of *good use* to ourselves, to *go to the house of mourning*. It seems, the prophet Jeremiah had been wont to abound in good offices of this kind, and it well became his character, both as a pious man and as a prophet; and one would think it should have made him better beloved among his people, than it should seem he was. But now God bids him not lament the death of his friends, as usual. For, (1.) His sorrow for the destruction of his country in general, must swallow up his sorrow for particular deaths. His tears must now be turned into another channel; and there is occasion enough for them all. (2.) He had little reason to lament those who died now just before the judgments entered, which he saw at the door; but rather to think them happy, who were seasonably *taken away from the evil to come*. (3.) This was to be a type of what was coming, when there should be such universal confusion, that all neighbourly, friendly offices should be neglected. Men shall be in *deaths so often*, and even *dying daily*, that they shall have no time, no room, no heart, for the ceremonies that used to attend death; the sorrows shall be so ponderous as not to admit relief; and every one so full of grief for his own troubles, that he shall have no thoughts of his neighbour's. All shall be mourners then, and no comforters; every one will find it enough to bear his own burthen; for, (v. 5.) *"I have taken away my peace from this people, put a full period to their prosperity, deprived them of health, and wealth, and quiet, and friends, and every thing wherewith they might comfort themselves and one another."* Whatever peace we enjoy, it is *God's peace*; it is his gift, and *if he gives quietness, who then can make trouble?* But if we make not a good use of his peace, he can and will *take it away*; and where are we then? Job xxxiv. 29. *I will take away my peace, even my loving-kindness and mercies*; these shall be shut up and restrained, which are the fresh springs from which all their fresh streams flow, and then farewell all good. Note, Those have cut themselves off from all true peace, that have thrown themselves out of the favour of God. All is gone, when God takes away from us his *loving-kindness and his mercies*. Then it follows, (v. 6.) *Both the great and the small shall die, even in this land*, the land of Canaan, that used to be called *the land of the living*. God's favour is our life; take away that, and *we die, we perish, we all perish*.

3. Jeremiah must not go to the *house of mirth*, any more than to the *house of mourning*, v. 1. It had been his custom, and it was innocent enough, when any of his friends made entertainments at their houses, and invited him to them, to *go and sit with them*, not merely to *drink*, but to *eat and to drink*, soberly and cheerfully. But now he must not take that liberty. (1.) Because it was unseasonable, and inconsistent with the providences of God that fell upon the land and nation. God called loud to *weeping, and mourning, and fasting*; he was coming forth against them in his judgments, and it was time for them

to *humble themselves*; and it well became the prophet, who gave them the warning, to give them an example of taking the warning, and complying with it, and so to make it appear that he did himself believe it. Ministers ought to be examples of self-denial and mortification, and to show themselves affected with these terrors of the Lord, with which they desire to affect others. And it becomes all the sons of Zion to sympathize with her in her afflictions, and not to be merry when she is perplexed, Amos vi. 6. (2.) Because he must thus show the people what sad times were coming upon them. His friends wondered that he would not meet them, as he used to do, in the house of feasting. But he lets them know, it was to intimate to them that all their feasting would be at an end shortly; (v. 9.) *"I will cause to cease the voice of mirth"*. You shall have nothing to feast on, nothing to rejoice in, but be surrounded with calamities that shall mar your mirth, and cast a damp upon it." God can find ways to tame the most jovial. "This shall be done *in this place*, in Jerusalem, that used to be the *joyous city*, and thought her joys were all secure to her; it shall be done *in your eyes*, *in your sight*, to be a vexation to you, who now look so haughty, and so merry; it shall be done *in your days*, you yourselves shall live to see it." The *voice of praise* they had made to cease by their iniquities and idolatries, and therefore justly God made to cease among them the *voice of mirth and gladness*. The voice of God's prophets was not heard, was not heeded, among them, and therefore no longer shall the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride, of the songs that used to grace the nuptials, be heard among them. See ch. vii. 34.

10. And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt shew this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? or what is our iniquity, or what is our sin, that we have committed against the LORD our God? 11. Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the LORD, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law: 12. And ye have done worse than your fathers; (for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me;) 13. Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night, where I will not shew you favour.

Here is,

1. An inquiry made into the reasons why God would bring those judgments upon them; (v. 10.) *When thou shalt show this people all these words*, the words of this curse, they will say unto thee, *Wherefore has the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us?* One would hope that there were some among them that asked this question with a humble, penitent heart, desiring to know what was the sin for which God contended with them, that they might *cast it away*, and prevent the judgment; "Show us the Jonah that raises the storm, and we will throw it overboard." But it seems here to be the language of those who quarrelled at the word of God, and challenged him to show what they had

done, which might deserve so severe a punishment; *'What is our iniquity? Or, what is our sin? What crime have we ever been guilty of, proportionable to such a sentence?'* Instead of humbling and condemning themselves, they stand upon their own justification; and insinuate that God did them wrong, in pronouncing this evil against them, that he *laid upon them more than was right*, and that they had reason to *enter into judgment with God*, Job xxxiv. 23. Note, It is amazing to see how hardly sinners are brought to justify God, and judge themselves, when they are in trouble, and to own the iniquity and the sin that have procured them the trouble.

2. A plain and full answer given to this inquiry. Do they ask the prophet why, and for what reason, God is thus angry with them? He shall not stop their mouths by telling them that they may be sure there is a sufficient reason, the righteous God is never *angry without cause*, without good cause; but he must tell them particularly what is the cause, that they may be convinced and humbled, or, at least, that God may be *justified*. Let them know then,

(1.) That God visited upon them the *iniquities of their fathers*; (v. 11.) *Your fathers have forsaken me, and have not kept my law; they shook off divine institutions and grew weary of them, they thought them too plain, too mean, and then they walked after other gods, whose worship was more gay and pompous; and, being fond of variety and novelty, they served them and worshipped them; and this was the sin which God had said, in the second commandment, he would visit upon their children, who kept up these idolatrous usages, because they received them by tradition from their fathers,* 1 Pet. i. 18.

(2.) That God reckoned with them for their own iniquities; (v. 12.) *'You have made your fathers' sin your own, and are become obnoxious to the punishment which in their days was deferred, for you have done worse than your fathers.'* If they had made a good use of their fathers' reprieve, and had been led by the patience of God to repentance, they should have fared the better for it, and the judgment should have been prevented, the reprieve turned into a national pardon; but, making an ill use of it, and being hardened by it in their sins, they fared the worse for it, and the reprieve being expired, an addition was made to the sentence, and it was executed with the more severity. They were more impudent and obstinate in sin than their fathers, *walked every one after the imagination of his heart*, made that their guide and rule, and were resolved to follow that on purpose *that they might not hearken to God* and his prophets. They designedly suffer their own lusts and passions to be noisy, that they might drown the voice of their consciences. No wonder then that God has taken up this resolution concerning them, (v. 13.) *'I will cast you out of this land, this land of light, this valley of vision; since you will not hearken to me, you shall not hear me, you shall be hurried away, not into a neighbouring country which you have formerly had some acquaintance and correspondence with, but into a far country, a land that ye know not, neither you nor your fathers; in which you have no interest, nor can expect to meet with any comfortable society, to be an allay to your misery.'* Justly were they banished into a *strange land*, who doted upon *strange gods*, which neither they nor their fathers knew, Deut. xxxii. 17. Two things would make their case there very miserable, and both of them relate to the soul, the better part; the greatest calamities of their captivity were those which affected that, and debarred them from its bliss. [1.] *'It is the happiness of the soul to be employed in the*

service of God; but there shall you serve other gods day and night, you shall be in continual temptation to serve them, and perhaps compelled to do it by your cruel taskmasters; and when you are forced to worship idols, you will be as averse to it as ever you were fond of it when it was forbidden you by your godly kings.' See how God often makes men's sin their punishment, and *fills the backslider in heart with his own ways*. "You shall have no public worship at all, but the worship of idols, and then you will think with regret how you slighted the worship of the true God." [2.] *'It is the happiness of the soul to have some tokens of the loving-kindness of God, but you shall go to a strange land, where I will not show you favour.'* If they had had God's favour, that would have made even the land of their captivity a pleasant land; but, if they lie under his wrath, the yoke of their oppression will be intolerable to them.

14. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; 15. But, The LORD liveth that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. 16. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks. 17. For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes. 18. And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcases of their detestable and abominable things. 19. O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanities, and things wherein there is no profit. 20. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods? 21. Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know, my hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is the LORD.

There is a mixture of *mercy* and *judgment* in these verses, and it is hard to know to which to apply some of the passages here, they are so interwoven; and some seem to look as far forward as the times of the gospel.

1. God will certainly execute judgment upon them for their idolatries. Let them expect it, for the decree is gone forth.

1. God sees all their sins, though they commit them ever so secretly, and palliate them ever so artfully; (v. 17.) *Mine eyes are upon all their ways*. They have not their eye upon God, have no regard to him, stand in no awe of him; but he has his eye upon them, neither they nor their sins are *hid from*

his face, from his eyes. Note, None of the sins of sinners either can be *concealed* from God, or shall be *overlooked* by him, Prov. v. 21. Job xxxiv. 21. Ps. xc. 8.

2. God is highly displeased, particularly at their idolatries, v. 18. As his omniscience convicts them, so his justice condemns them; *I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double*; not double to what it deserves, but double to what they expect, and to what I have done formerly. Or, I will recompense it *abundantly*, they shall now pay for their long reprieve, and the divine patience they have abused. The sin for which God has a controversy with them, is, their having *defiled God's land* with their idolatries, and not only alienated that which he was entitled to as his inheritance, but polluted that which he dwelt in with delight as his inheritance, and made it offensive to him *with the carcasses of their detestable things*, the gods themselves which they worshipped, the images of which, though they were of gold and silver, were as loathsome to God as the putrid carcasses of men or beasts are to us; idols are *carcasses of detestable things*, God hates them, and so should we. Or, he might refer to the sacrifices which they offered to these idols, with which *the land was filled*; for they had *high places* in all the coasts and corners of it. This was the sin which, above any other, incensed God against them.

3. He will find out and raise up instruments of his wrath, that shall *cast them out of their land*, according to the sentence passed upon them, (v. 16.) *I will send for many fishers, and many hunters*; the Chaldean army, that shall have many ways of insinuating and destroying them, by *fraud* as fishers, by *force* as hunters: they shall find them out wherever they are, and shall chase and closely pursue them, to their ruin; they shall *discover* them wherever they are hid, in *hills or mountains, or holes of the rocks*, and shall drive them out. God has various ways of prosecuting a people with his judgments, that avoid the convictions of his word. He has men at command fit for his purpose; he has them within call, and can *send for them* when he pleases.

4. Their bondage in Babylon shall be sorer and much more grievous than that in Egypt, their taskmasters more cruel, and their lives made more bitter. This is implied in the promise, (v. 14, 15.) that their deliverance out of Babylon shall be more illustrious in itself, and more welcome to them, than that out of Egypt. Their slavery in Egypt came upon them gradually and almost insensibly, that in Babylon came upon them at once, and with all the aggravating circumstances of terror. In Egypt they had a Goshen of their own, but none such in Babylon. In Egypt they were used as servants that were useful; in Babylon, as captives that had been hateful.

5. They shall be warned, and God shall be glorified, by these judgments brought upon them. These judgments have a voice, and speak aloud, (1.) *Instruction to them*; when God *chastens* them he *teaches* them. By this rod God expostulates with them, (v. 20.) "*Shall a man make gods to himself?* Will any man be so perfectly void of all reason and consideration, as to think that a god of his own making can stand him in any stead? Will you ever again be such fools as you have been, to make to yourselves gods, which are *no gods*, when you have a God whom you may call *your own*, who made you, and is himself the true and living God?" (2.) *Honour to God*; for he will be known by the judgments which he executeth. He will *first* recompense their iniquity, (v. 18.) and then he will *this once*, (v. 21.) *this once for all*, not by many interruptions of their peace, but this one desolation and destruction of it; or, *This once* and no more, *I will cause*

them to know my hand, the length and weight of my punishing hand, how far it can reach, and how deep it can wound. And *they shall know that my name is Jehovah*, a God with whom there is no contending, who gives being to threatenings, and puts life into them as well as promises.

11. Yet he has mercy in store for them, intimations of which come in here for the encouragement of the prophet himself, and of those few among them that *trembled at God's word*. It was said, with an air of severity, (v. 13.) that God would banish them into a strange land; but that thereby they might not be driven to despair, there follow, immediately, words of comfort:

1. *The days will come*, the joyful days, when the same hand that *dispersed* them, shall *gather them* again, v. 14, 15. They are *cast out*, but they are not *cast off*, they are not *cast away*; they shall be brought up *from the land of the north*, the land of their captivity, where they are held with a strong hand, and from *all the lands whither they are driven*, and where they seemed to be lost and buried in the crowd; nay, *I will bring them again into their own land*, and settle them there. As the foregoing threatenings agreed with what was written in the law, so does this promise, (Lev. xxvi. 44.) *Yet will I not cast them away*, Deut. xxx. 4. *Thence will the Lord thy God gather thee*. And the following words (v. 16.) may be understood as a promise; God will send for *fishers and hunters*, the Medes and Persians, that shall find them out in the countries where they are scattered, and send them back to their own land; or, Zerubbabel, and others of their own nation, who should *fish* them out, and *hunt* after them, to persuade them to return; or whatever instruments the Spirit of God made use of to *stir up their spirits to go up*, which at first they were backward to. They began to nestle in Babylon; but as *an eagle stirs up her nest, and flutters over her young*, so God did by them, Zech. ii. 7.

2. Their deliverance out of Babylon should, upon some accounts, be more illustrious and memorable than their deliverance out of Egypt was. Both were the Lord's doing, and marvellous in their eyes, both were proofs that *the Lord liveth*, and were to be kept in everlasting remembrance, to his honour, as *the living God*; but the fresh mercy shall be so surprising, so welcome, that it shall even abolish the memory of the former. Not but that *new mercies* should put us in mind of *old ones*, and give us occasion to renew our thanksgivings for them; yet, because we are tempted to think that the former days were better than these, and to ask, *Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of?* as if God's arm were *waxed short*, and to cry up the *age of miracles* above the later ages, when mercies are wrought in a way of common providence; therefore we are allowed here *comparatively* to forget the bringing of Israel out of Egypt as a deliverance outdone by that out of Babylon. That was done *by night and power*, this *by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts*, Zech. iv. 6. In this there was more of *pardonning mercy* (the most glorious branch of divine mercy) than in that; for their captivity in Babylon had more in it of the punishment of sin than their bondage in Egypt; and therefore that which comforts Zion in her deliverance out of Babylon, is this, that *her iniquity is pardoned*, Isa. xl. 2. Note, God glorifies himself, and we must glorify him, in those *mercies* that have no *miracles* in them, as well as in those that have. And though the favours of God to our fathers must not be forgotten, yet those to ourselves in our own day we must especially give thanks for.

3. Their deliverance out of captivity shall be accompanied with blessed reformation, and they

shall return, effectually cured of their inclination to idolatry, which will complete their deliverance, and make it a mercy indeed. They had defiled their own land with their *detestable things*, v. 18. But when they have smarted for so doing, they shall come and humble themselves before God, v. 19. --21.

(1.) They shall be brought to acknowledge that their God only is *God indeed*, for he is a *God in need*; *My Strength* to support and comfort me, *my Fortress* to protect and shelter me, and *my Refuge* to whom I may flee *in the day of affliction*. Note, Need drives many to God, who had set themselves at a distance from him. Those that slighted him in the day of their prosperity, will be glad to flee to him in the day of their affliction.

(2.) They shall be quickened to return to him by the conversion of the Gentiles; *The Gentiles shall come to thee from the ends of the earth*; and therefore shall not we come? Or, The Jews who had by their idolatries made themselves as Gentiles, (so I rather understand it,) shall *come to thee* by repentance and reformation, shall return to their duty and allegiance, even *from the ends of the earth*, from all the countries whither they were driven. The prophet comforts himself with the hopes of this, and in a transport of joy returns to God the notice he had given him of it; "*O Lord, my Strength and my Fortress, I am now easy, since thou hast given me a prospect of multitudes that shall come to thee from the ends of the earth*, both of Jewish converts and of Gentile proselytes." Note, Those that are brought to God themselves, cannot but rejoice greatly to see others coming to him, coming back to him.

(3.) They shall acknowledge the folly of their ancestors, which it becomes them to do, when they were smarting for the sins of their ancestors; "*Surely our fathers have inherited*, not the satisfaction they promised themselves and their children, but *lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit*; we are now sensible that our fathers were cheated in their idolatrous worship, it did not *prove* what it *promised*, and therefore, what have we to do any more with it?" Note, It were well if the disappointment which some have met with in the service of sin, and the pernicious consequences of it to them, might prevail to deter others from treading in their steps.

(4.) They shall *reason* themselves out of their idolatry; and that reformation is likely to be sincere and durable, which results from a rational conviction of the gross absurdity there is in sin. They shall argue thus with themselves, (and it is well argued,) *Should a man* be such a fool, so perfectly void of the reason of a man, as to *make gods to himself*, the creatures of his own fancy, the work of his own hands, when they are really *no gods*? v. 20. Can a man be so besotted, so perfectly lost to human understanding, as to expect any divine blessing or favour from that which pretends to no divinity but what is first received from him?

(5.) They shall herein give honour to God, and make it to appear that they know both *his hand* in his providence, and *his name* in his word, and that they are brought to know *his name*, by what they are made to know of *his hand*, v. 21. *This once*, now at length, they shall be made to know that which they would not be brought to know by all the pains the prophets took with them. Note, So stupid are we, that nothing less than the *mighty* hand of divine grace, *known* experimentally, can make us know rightly the name of God as it is revealed to us.

4. Their deliverance out of captivity shall be a type and figure of the great salvation to be wrought out by the Messiah, who shall *gather together in*

one the children of God that were scattered abroad. And this is that which so far outshines the deliverance out of *Egypt*, as even to eclipse the lustre of it, and make it even to be forgotten. To this some apply that of the *many fishers and hunters*, the preachers of the gospel, who were *fishers of men*, to enclose souls with the gospel-net to find them out *in every mountain and hill*, and secure them for Christ. Then the *Gentiles came to God*, some *from the ends of the earth*, and turned to the worship of him from the service of dumb idols.

CHAP. XVII.

In this chapter, I. God convicts the Jews of the sin of idolatry by the notorious evidence of the fact, and condemns them to captivity for it, v. 1. . 4. II. He shows them the folly of all their carnal confidences, which should stand them in no stead, when God's time was to contend with them; and that this was one of the sins upon which his controversy with them was grounded, v. 5. . 11. III. The prophet makes his appeal and address to God, upon occasions of the malice of his enemies against him, committing himself to the divine protection, and begging of God to appear for him, v. 12. . 18. IV. God, by the prophet, warns the people to keep holy the sabbath-day, assuring them that, if they did, it should be the lengthening out of their tranquillity; but that, if not, God would by some desolating judgment assert the honour of his sabbaths, v. 19. . 27.

1. **T**HE sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars; 2. Whilst their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills. 3. O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance and all thy treasures to the spoil, and thy high places for sin, throughout all thy borders. 4. And thou, even thyself, shalt discontinue from thy heritage that I gave thee; and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not; for ye have kindled a fire in mine anger, which shall burn for ever.

The people had asked, (ch. xiv. 10.) *What is our iniquity, and what is our sin?* As if they could not be charged with any thing worth speaking of, for which God should enter into judgment with them; their challenge was answered there, but here we have a further reply to it; in which,

I. The indictment is fully proved upon the prisoners, both the fact and the fault; their sin is too plain to be denied, and too bad to be excused, and they have nothing to plead either in extenuation of the crime, or in arrest and mitigation of the judgment.

(1.) They cannot plead *not guilty*, for their sins are upon record in the book of God's omniscience, and their own conscience; nay, and they are obvious to the eye and observation of the world, v. 1. 2. They are *written* before God in the most legible and indelible characters, and *sealed among his treasures*, never to be forgotten, Deut. xxxii. 34. They are written there with a *pen of iron*, and with the *point of a diamond*; what is so written will not be worn out by time, but is, as Job speaks, *graven in the rock for ever*. Note, The sin of sinners is never forgotten, till it is forgiven. It is *ever before God*, till by repentance it comes to be *ever before us*. It is *graven upon the table of their heart*; their own consciences witness against them, and are instead of a thousand witnesses. What is *graven on the heart*, though it may be covered and closed up for a time, yet, being *graven*, it cannot be razed

out, but will be produced in evidence, when the books shall be opened. Nay, we need not appeal to the *tables of the heart*, perhaps they will not own the convictions of their consciences. We need go no further, for proof of the charge, than the *horns of their altars*, on which the blood of their idolatrous sacrifices was sprinkled, and perhaps the names of the idols, to whose honour they were erected, were *inscribed*. Their neighbours will witness against them, and all the creatures they have abused by using them in the service of their lusts. To complete the evidence, their own children shall be witnesses against them; they will *tell truth*, when their fathers dissemble and prevaricate; they remember *the altars and the groves* to which their parents took them when they were little, v. 2. It appears that they were full of them, and acquainted with them betimes, they talk of them so frequently, so familiarly, and with so much delight.

(2.) They cannot plead that they *repent*, or are come to a *better mind*; no, as the guilt of their sin is *undeniable*, so their inclination to sin is *invincible and incurable*. In this sense many understand v. 1, 2. Their sin is deeply engraven as with a *pen of iron in the tables of their hearts*; they have a rooted affection to it, it is woven into their very nature; their sin is dear to them as that is of which we say, It is *engraven on our hearts*. The bias of their minds is still as strong as ever toward their idols, and they are not wrought upon either by the word or rod of God to forget them, and abate their affection to them. It is *written upon the horns of their altars*, for they have given up their names to their idols, and resolve to abide by what they have done; they have bound themselves, as with cords, to the horns of the altars. And v. 2. may be read fully to this sense, *As they remember their children, so remember they their altars and their groves*; they are as fond of them and take as much pleasure in them, as men do in their own children, and are as loath to part with them; they will live and die with their idols, and can no more forget them than a woman can forget her sucking child.

2. The indictment being thus fully proved, the judgment is affirmed, and the sentence ratified, v. 3, 4. Forasmuch as they are thus wedded to their sins, and will not *part with them*.

(1.) They shall be made to part with *their treasures*, and those shall be given into the hands of strangers. Jerusalem is *God's mountain in the field*, it was built on a hill in the midst of a plain; all the treasures of that wealthy city will God *give to the spoil*. Or, *My mountains with the fields, thy wealth and all thy treasures, will I expose to spoil*; but the products of the country, and the stores of the city, shall be seized by the Chaldeans. Justly are men stripped of that which they have served their idols with, and have made the food and fuel of their lusts. *My mountain* (so the whole land was, Ps. lxxviii. 54. Deut. xi. 11.) you have turned into *your high places for sin*, have worshipped your idols upon the *high hills*, (v. 2.) and now they shall be *given for a spoil in all your borders*. What we make for a sin, God will make for a *spoil*; for what comfort can we expect in that wherewith God is *dishonoured*?

(2.) They shall be made to part with *their inheritance*, with their *real estates*, as well as *personal*, and shall be carried captives into a strange land; (v. 4.) *Thou, even thyself, or thou thyself, and those that are in thee*, all the inhabitants, shall *discontinue from thy heritage that I gave thee*. God owns that it was *their heritage*, and that he *gave* it them; they had an unquestionable title to it, which was an aggravation of their folly in throwing themselves out of the possession of it. It is *through thyself*, (so some read it,) through thine own default,

that thou art dispossessed. *Thou shalt discontinue, or intermit, the occupation of thy land*. The law appointed them to *let their land rest*, (it is the word here used,) one year in seven, Exod. xxiii. 11. They did not observe that law, and now God would compel them to *let it rest*; The land shall *enjoy her sabbaths*; (Lev. xxvi. 34.) and yet it shall be no rest to them, they shall *serve their enemies in a land they know not*. Observe, [1.] Sin works a discontinuance of our comforts, and deprives us of the *enjoyment* of that which God has given us. Yet, [2.] A discontinuance of the possession is not a defenceance of the right, but it is intimated, that upon their repentance, they shall recover possession again. For the present, *ye have kindled a fire in mine anger*, which burns so hot, that it seems as if it would burn *for ever*; and so it will, unless you repent, for it is the anger of an *everlasting* God fastening upon *immortal* souls; and *who knows the power of that anger*?

4. Thus saith the LORD, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD: 6. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. 7. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is: 8. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. 9. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? 10. I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. 11. As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.

It is excellent doctrine that is preached in these verses, and of general concern and use to us all, and it does not appear to have any particular reference to the present state of Judah and Jerusalem; the prophet's sermons were not all *prophetical*, but some of them *practical*; yet this discourse, which, probably, we have here only the heads of, would be of singular use to them by way of caution, not to misplace their confidence in the day of their distress. Let us all learn what we are taught here,

1. Concerning the disappointment and vexation they will certainly meet with who depend upon creatures for success and relief when they are in trouble; (v. 5, 6.) *Cursed be the man that trusts in man*; God pronounces him cursed for the affront he thereby puts upon him; or, *Cursed*, that is, miserable, *is the man* that does so, for he leans upon a broken reed, which will not only fail him, but will run into his hand and pierce it. Observe, (1.) The sin here condemned; it is *trusting in man*, putting that confidence in the wisdom and power, the kindness and faithfulness, of men, which should be placed in those attributes of God only; making our applications to men, and raising our expectations from them as principal agents, whereas they are but instruments in the hand of Providence. It is *making flesh the*

arm we stay upon, the arm we work with, and with which we hope to work our point; the arm under which we shelter ourselves, and on which we depend for protection. God is his people's *Arm*, Isa. xxxiii. 2. We must not think to make any creature to be that to us, which God has undertaken to be. Man is called *flesh*, to show the folly of those that make them their confidence; he is *flesh*, weak and feeble, as *flesh* without bones or sinews, that has no strength at all in it; he is inactive as *flesh* without spirit, which is a dead thing. He is mortal and dying, as *flesh* which soon putrefies and corrupts, and is continually wasting. Nay, he is false and sinful, and has lost his integrity; so his being *flesh* signifies, Gen. vi. 3. (2.) The great malignity there is in this sin; it is the *departure of the evil heart of unbelief from the living God*. They that trust in man, perhaps draw nigh to God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, they call him *their Hope*, and say that they trust in him; but really *their heart departs from him*: they distrust him, despise him, and decline a correspondence with him. Cleaving to the cistern is leaving the Fountain, and is resented accordingly. (3.) The fatal consequences of this sin. He that puts a confidence in man, puts a cheat upon himself; for, (v. 6.) *He shall be like the heath in the desert*, a sorry shrub, the product of barren ground, sapless, useless, and worthless; his comforts shall all fail him, and his hopes be blasted; he shall wither, be dejected in himself, and trampled on by all about him. *When good comes, he shall not see it, he shall not share in it*; when the times mend, they shall not mend with him, but he shall *inhabit the parched places in the wilderness*; his expectation shall be continually frustrated; when others have a harvest, he shall have none. They that trust to their own *righteousness* and *strength*, and think they can do well enough without the merit and grace of Christ, thus *make flesh their arm*, and their souls cannot prosper in graces or comforts; they can neither *produce the fruits* of acceptable services to God, nor *reap the fruits* of saving blessings from him; they *dwell in a dry land*.

2. Concerning the abundant satisfaction which they have, and will have, who make God their confidence, who live by faith in his providence and promise, who *refer themselves* to him and his guidance at all times, and *repose themselves* in him and his love in the most unquiet times, v. 7, 8. Observe, (1.) The duty required of us, *To trust in the Lord*, to do our duty to him, and then depend upon him to bear us out in doing it; when creatures and second causes either deceive or threaten us, either are false to us or fierce against us, to commit ourselves to God as all-sufficient, both to fill up the place of those who fail us, and to protect us from those who set upon us. It is to *make the Lord our Hope*, his favour the good we *hope for*, and his power the strength we *hope in*. (2.) The comfort that attends the doing of this duty. He that does so, shall be as *a tree planted by the waters*, a choice tree, about which great care has been taken to set it in the best soil, so far from being like the *heath in the wilderness*; like a tree that *spreads out her roots*, and thereby is firmly fixed, spreads them out *by the rivers*, whence it draws abundance of sap; which denotes both the establishment and the comfort which they have, who make God their Hope; they are easy, they are pleasant, and enjoy a continual security and serenity of mind; a tree thus planted, thus watered, shall *not see when heat comes*, shall not sustain any damage from the most scorching heats of summer; it is so well moistened from its roots, that it shall be sufficiently guarded against drought. Those that make God their Hope, [1.] They shall *flourish* in credit and comfort; like a tree

that is *always green*, whose *leaf* does not wither; they shall be *cheerful* to themselves, and *beautiful* in the eyes of others. These who thus *give honour* to God by *giving him credit*, God will *put honour* upon them, and make them the ornament and delight of the places where they live, as green trees are. [2.] They shall be *fixed* in an inward peace and satisfaction; they shall *not be careful in a year of drought*, when there is want of rain, for, as it has *seed in itself*, so it has *its moisture*. Those who make God *their Hope*, have enough in him to make up the want of all creature-comforts. We need not be solicitous about the breaking of a cistern, as long as we have the fountain. [3.] They shall be fruitful in holiness, and in all good works. They who trust in God, and by faith derive strength and grace from him, shall *not cease from yielding fruit*; they shall still be enabled to do that which will redound to the glory of God, the benefit of others, and their own account.

3. Concerning the sinfulness of man's heart, and the divine inspection it is always under, v. 9, 10. It is folly to trust in man, for he is not only frail, but false and deceitful. We are apt to think that we trust in God, and are entitled to the blessings here promised to them who do so. But this is a thing about which our own hearts deceive us as much as any thing; we think that we trust in God, when really we do not, as appears by this, that our hopes and fears *rise or fall*, according as second causes *smile or frown*. But it is true, in general.

(1.) There is that wickedness in our hearts, which we ourselves are not aware of, and do not suspect to be there; nay, it is a common mistake among the children of men to think themselves, their own hearts at least, a great deal better than they really are. *The heart*, the conscience of man, in his corrupt and fallen state, is *deceitful above all things*; it is subtle and false, it is apt to *supplant*; so the word properly signifies, it is that from which Jacob had his name, a *supplanter*. It calls evil good, and good evil; puts false colours upon things, and cries *peace* to those to whom peace does not belong. When men say in their hearts, suffer their hearts to whisper to them, that either there is no God, or he does not see, or he will not require, or they shall have peace, though they go on; in these, and a thousand similar suggestions, the heart is *deceitful*: it cheats men into their own ruin; and this will be the aggravation of it, that they are self-deceivers, self-destroyers. Herein the heart is *desperately wicked*; it is *deadly*, it is *desperate*. The case is bad indeed, and in a manner deplorable, and past relief, if the conscience, which should rectify the errors of the other faculties, is itself a mother of falsehood, and a ringleader in the delusion. What will become of a man, if that in him which should be the *candle of the Lord*, give a false light, if God's deputy in the soul, that is intrusted to support his interests, betrays them? Such is the deceitfulness of the heart, that we may truly say, *Who can know it?* Who can describe how bad the heart is? We cannot know our own hearts, not what they will do in an hour of temptation, (Hezekiah did not, Peter did not,) not what corrupt dispositions there are in them, nor in how many things they have turned aside; who can understand his errors? Much less can we know the hearts of others, or have any dependence upon them. But,

(2.) Whatever wickedness there is in the heart, God sees it, and knows it, is perfectly acquainted with it, and apprized of it; *I the Lord search the heart*. This is true of all that is in the heart, all the *thoughts* of it, the *quickest*, and those that are most carelessly overlooked by ourselves; all the *intent*s of it, the *closest*, and those that are most artfully disguised, and industriously concealed from others. Men may be imposed upon, but God can-

act. He not only *searches the heart* with a piercing eye, but he *tries the reins*, to pass a judgment upon what he discovers, to give every thing its true character and due weight. He tries, as the gold is tried, whether it be standard or no; as the prisoner is tried, whether he be guilty or no. And this judgment which he makes of the heart, is in order to his passing judgment upon the man; it is *to give to every man according to his ways*, according to the *desert and tendency* of them; life to those that walked in the ways of life, and death to those that persisted in the *paths of the destroyer*; and according to the *fruit of his doings*, the effect and influence his doings have had upon others; or, according to what is settled by the word of God to be the fruit of men's doings, blessings to the obedient, and curses to the disobedient. Note, *Therefore God is Judge himself*, and he *alone*, because he, and none besides, knows the hearts of the children of men. It is true especially of all the *deceitfulness* and *wickedness* of the heart; all its corrupt devices, desires, and designs, God observes and discerns; and (which is more than any man can do) he judges of the overt act by the heart. Note, God knows more evil of us than we do by ourselves; which is a good reason why we should not flatter ourselves, but always stand in awe of the judgment of God.

4. Concerning the curse that attends wealth unjustly gotten: fraud and violence had been reigning, crying sins in Judah and Jerusalem; now the prophet would have those who had been guilty of these sins, and were now stripped of all they had, to read their sin in their punishment; (*v. 11.*) *He that gets riches, and not by right*, though he may make them his hope, he shall never have joy of them. Observe, It is possible that those who use unlawful means to get wealth may succeed therein, and prosper for a time; and it is a temptation to many to defraud and oppress their neighbours, when there is money to be got by it. He who has got *treasures by vanity* and a *lying tongue*, may hug himself in his success, and say, *I am rich*; nay, and I am innocent too, (*Hos. xii. 8.*) but *he shall leave them in the midst of his days*; they shall be taken from him, or he from them; God shall cut him off with some surprising stroke then, when he says, *Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years*, *Luke xii. 19, 20.* He shall leave them to he knows not whom, and shall not be able to take any of his riches away with him. It intimates what a great vexation it is to a worldly man at death, that he must leave his riches behind him; and *justly* may it be a terror to those who got them *unjustly*; for though the wealth will not follow them to another world, the guilt will, and the torment of an everlasting, *Son, remember*, *Luke xvi. 25.* Thus, *at his end, he shall be a fool*, a Nabal, whose wealth did him no good, which he had so sordidly hoarded, when his heart became *dead as a stone*. He was a fool all along, sometimes perhaps his own conscience told him so, but *at his end* he will appear to be so. Those are fools indeed, who are fools in *their latter end*: and such multitudes will prove, who were cried up as *wise men*, that did *well for themselves*, *Ps. xlix. 13, 18.* They that get grace will be wise in *their latter end*, will have the comfort of it in death, and the benefit of it to eternity; (*Prov. xix. 20.*) but they that place their happiness in the wealth of the world, and, right or wrong, *will be rich*, will rue the folly of it, when it is too late to rectify the fatal mistake. This is like the hartridge that sits on eggs, and hatches them not, but they are broken (*as Job xxxix. 15.*) or stolen, (*as Isa. x. 14.*) or they become addle: some sort of fowl there was, well known among the Jews, whose case this commonly was. The rich man takes a great deal of pains to get an estate together, and sits brooding upon it, but never has any comfort or satis-

faction in it; his projects to enrich himself by sinful courses miscarry, and come to nothing. Let us therefore be *wise in time*; what we get, to get it *honestly*; and what we have, to use it *charitably*; that we may lay up in store a good foundation, and be *wise for eternity*.

12. A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. 13. O LORD, the Hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters. 14. Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise. 15. Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of the LORD? let it come now. 16. As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee; neither have I desired the woful day, thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee. 17. Be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil. 18. Let them be confounded that persecute me, but let not me be confounded; let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed: bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.

Here, as often before, we have the prophet retired for private meditation, and *alone with God*. Those ministers that would have comfort in their work, must be much so. In his converse here with God and his own heart, he takes the liberty, which devout souls sometimes use in their soliloquies, to pass from one thing to another, without tying themselves too strictly to the laws of method and coherence.

1. He acknowledges the great favour of God to his people, in setting up a revealed religion among them, and dignifying them with divine institutions: (*v. 12.*) *A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary*: the temple at Jerusalem, where God manifested his special presence, where the lively oracles were lodged, where the people paid their homage to their Sovereign, and whither they fled for refuge in distress, was the *place of their sanctuary*. That was a *glorious high throne*; it was a throne of holiness, that made it truly glorious; it was God's throne, that made it truly high. Jerusalem is called the *city of the great King*, not only Israel's King, but the King of the whole earth, so that it might justly be deemed the metropolis, or royal city of the world. It was *from the beginning* so, from the first projecting of it by David, and building of it by Solomon, 2 Chron. ii. 9. It was the honour of Israel, that God set up such a glorious throne among them. *As the glorious and high throne*, that is, heaven, is the *place of our sanctuary*; so some read it. Note, All good men have a high value and veneration for the ordinances of God, and reckon the *place of the sanctuary a glorious high throne*. Jeremiah mentions this here, either as a plea with God for mercy to their land, in honour of the *throne of his glory*, (*ch. xiv. 21.*) or as an aggravation of the sin of his people, in forsaking God, though his throne was among them, and so profaning his crown, and the *place of his sanctuary*.

2. He acknowledges the righteousness of God, in abandoning those to ruin, that forsook him, and revolted from their allegiance to him, *v. 13.* He

speaks it to God, as subscribing both to the certainty and to the equity of it; *O Lord, the Hope* of those in Israel that adhere to thee, *all that forsake thee shall be ashamed*. They *must* of necessity be so, or they forsake thee for lying vanities, which will deceive them and make them ashamed; they *will be ashamed*, for they shame themselves; they will *justly* be put to shame, for they have forsaken him who alone can keep them in countenance, when troubles come. *Let them be ashamed*; so some read it; and so it is a pious imprecation of the wrath of God upon them, or of petition for his grace, to make them penitently ashamed. *They that depart from me*, from the word of God which I have preached, they do in effect depart from God; as those that return to God are said to *return to the prophet*, ch. xv. 19. They that depart *from thee*, (so some read it,) shall be *written in the earth*; they shall soon be *blotted out*, as that is which is written in the dust; they shall be trampled upon, and exposed to contempt; they belong to the earth, and shall be numbered among earthly people, who lay up their treasure on earth, and whose names are *not written in heaven*. And they deserve to be thus written with the fools in Israel, that their folly may be made manifest unto all, because they have *forsaken the Lord, the Fountain of living waters*, spring waters, and that for broken cisterns. Note, God is to all that are his, a *Fountain of living waters*. There is a *fulness* of comfort in him, an overflowing, ever-flowing fulness, like that of a fountain; it is always *fresh*, and *clear*, and *clean*, like spring water, while the pleasures of sin are puddle-waters. They are *free* to it, it is not a *fountain sealed*; they deserve therefore to be condemned, as Adam, to *red earth*, to which by the corruption of their nature they are *allied*, because they have forsaken the *garden of the Lord*, which is so *well watered*. They that depart from God are *written in the earth*.

5. He prays to God for *healing, saving* mercy for himself. "If the case of those be so miserable, that *depart from God*, let me always *draw nigh* to him, (Ps. lxxiii. 27, 28.) and, in order to that, *Lord heal me*, and *save me*, v. 14. *Heal my backslidings*, my bent to backslide, and *save me* from being carried away by the strength of the stream, to forsake thee." He was *wounded* in spirit with grief upon many accounts; "Lord, *heal me* with thy comforts, and make me easy." He was continually exposed to the malice of unreasonable men; "Lord, *save me* from them, and let me not fall into their wicked hands. *Heal me*, sanctify me by thy grace; *save me*, bring me to thy glory." All that shall be *saved* hereafter are *sanctified* now; unless the disease of sin be purged out, the soul cannot live. To enforce this petition he pleads, (1.) The firm belief he had of God's power; *Heal thou me, and then I shall be healed*; the cure will certainly be wrought if thou undertake it; it shall be a *thorough cure*, and not a *palliative* one. Those that come to God to be healed, ought to be abundantly satisfied in the all-sufficiency of their Physician. *Save me, and then I shall certainly be saved*, be my dangers and enemies ever so threatening. If *God hold us up, we shall live*; if he protect us, we shall be safe. (2.) The sincere regard he had to God's glory; "For *thou art my Praise*, and for that reason I desire to be healed and saved, *that I may live and praise thee*, Ps. cxix. 175. Thou art he *whom I praise*, and the praise due to thee I never gave to another. Thou art he whom I *glory in*, and *boast of*, for on thee do I depend. Thou art he that furnishes me with continual matter for praise, and I have given thee praise of the favours already bestowed upon me. *Thou shalt be my praise*;" (so some read it); "heal me, and save me, and thou shalt have the glory of it. *My praise shall be continually of thee*," Ps. lxxi. 6.—lxxix. 13.

4. He complains of the infidelity and daring impiety of the people to whom he preached. It greatly troubled him, and he shows before God this trouble; as the servant that had slights put upon him by the guests he was sent to invite, *came and showed his Lord these things*. He had faithfully delivered God's message to them; and what answer has he to return to him that sent him? *Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now*, v. 15. Isa. v. 19. They bantered the prophet, and made a jest of that which he delivered with the greatest seriousness. (1.) They *denied the truth* of what he said; "If that be the *word of the Lord*, which thou speakest to us, *where is it?* Why is it not fulfilled?" Thus the patience of God was impudently abused, as a ground to question his veracity. (2.) They *defied the terror* of what he said; "Let God Almighty do his worst, let all he has said come to pass, we shall do well enough; the lion is not so fierce as he is painted, Amos v. 18. Lord, to what purpose is it to speak to men that will neither *believe* nor *fear*?"

5. He appeals to God concerning the faithful discharge of the office to which he was called, v. 16. The people did all they could to make him weary of his work, to exasperate him, and make him uneasy, and tempt him to prevaricate, and alter his message, for fear of displeasing them; but, "Lord," says he, "*thou knowest* I have not yielded to them." (1.) He continued constant to his work. His office, instead of being his credit and protection, exposed him to reproach, contempt, and injury; "Yet," says he, "*I have not hastened from being a pastor after thee*; I have not left my work, nor sued for a discharge, or *quietus*." Prophets were *pastors* to the people, to feed them with the good word of God; but they were to be *pastors after God*, and all ministers must be so, *according to his heart*, (ch. iii. 15.) to follow him, and the directions and instructions he gives; such a pastor Jeremiah was; and though he met with as much difficulty and discouragement as ever any man did, yet he did not fly off as Jonah did, nor desire to be excused from going any more on God's errands. Note, Those that are employed for God, though their success answer not their expectation, must not therefore throw up their commission, but continue to *follow God*, though the storm be in their faces. (2.) He kept up his affection to the people. Though they were very abusive to him, he was compassionate to them; *I have not desired the woful day*. The day of the accomplishment of his prophecies would be a *woful day* indeed to Jerusalem, and therefore he deprecated it, and wished it might never come; though, as to himself, it would be the avenging of him upon his persecutors, and the proving of him a true prophet, (which they had questioned, v. 15.) and upon those accounts he might be tempted to *desire* it. Note, God does not, and therefore ministers must not, desire the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn and live. Though we *warn* of the woful day, we must not *wish* for it, but rather *weep* because of it, as Jeremiah did. (3.) He kept close to his instructions; though he might have carried favour with the people, or at least have avoided their displeasure, if he had not been so sharp in his reproofs, and severe in his threatenings, yet he would deliver his message faithfully; and that he had done so, was a comfort to him; "Lord, *thou knowest that which came out of my lips, was right before thee*; it exactly agreed with what I had received from thee, and therefore thou art reflected upon in their quarrelling with me." Note, If what we say and do be *right before God*, we may easily despise the reproaches and censures of men. *It is a small thing to be judged of their judgment*.

6. He humbly begs of God, that he would own

him, and protect him, and carry him on cheerfully in that work to which God had so plainly called him, and he had so sincerely devoted himself. Two things he here desires,

(1.) That he might have *comfort* in serving the God that sent him; (v. 17.) *Be not thou a terror to me.* Surely more is implied than is expressed; "Be thou a *Comfort* to me, and let thy favour rejoice my heart, and encourage me, when my enemies do all they can to terrify me, and either to drive me from my work, or to make me drive on heavily in it." Note, The best have that in them, which might justly make God a terror to them, as he was for some time to Job, (ch. vi. 4.) to Asaph, (Ps. lxxvii. 3.) to Heman, (Ps. lxxxviii. 15.) And this is that which good men, *knowing the terrors of the Lord*, dread and deprecate more than any thing; nay, whatever frightful accidents may befall them, or how formidable soever their enemies may appear to them, they can do well enough, so long as God is not a *Terror* to them. He pleads, "*Thou art my hope*; and then nothing else is *my fear*, no, not in the day of evil, when it is most threatening, most pressing. My dependence is upon thee; and therefore *be not a Terror to me.*" Note, Those that by faith make God their Confidence, shall have him for their comfort in the worst of times, if it be not their own fault: if we make him our *trust*, we shall not find him our *terror*.

(2.) That he might have *courage* in dealing with the people to whom he was sent, v. 18. They persecuted him, who should have entertained and encouraged him; "Lord," says he, "*let them be confounded*, let them be overpowered by the convictions of the world, and made *ashamed* of their obstinacy, or else let the judgments threatened be at length executed upon them; but *let not me be confounded*, let not me be terrified by their menaces, so as to betray my trust. Note, God's ministers have work to do, which they need not be either ashamed or afraid to go on in, but they do need to be helped by the divine grace to go on in it without shame or fear. Jeremiah had not *desired the woful day* upon his country in general; but as to his persecutors, in a just and holy indignation at their malice, he prays, *Bring upon them the day of evil*; in hope that the bringing of it upon them might prevent the bringing of it upon the country; if they were taken away, the people would be better; "Therefore *destroy them with a double destruction*, let them be utterly destroyed, root and branch; and let the prospect of that destruction be their present confusion." This the prophet prays, not at all that he might be *avenged*, nor so much that he might be *eased*, but that the Lord may be *known by the judgments which he executes*.

19. Thus saith the LORD unto me, Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem; 20. And say unto them, Hear ye the word of the LORD, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates: 21. Thus saith the LORD, Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath-day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; 22. Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath-day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath-day, as I commanded your fathers. 23. But they obeyed

not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction. 24. And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the LORD, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath-day, but hallow the sabbath-day, to do no work therein; 25. Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever. 26. And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt-offerings, and sacrifices, and meat-offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the LORD. 27. But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath-day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath-day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

These verses are a sermon concerning *sabbath-sanctification*; it is a word which the prophet received from the Lord, and was ordered to deliver in the most solemn, public manner to the people; for they were sent not only to reprove sin, and to press obedience in general, but they must descend to particulars. This message must be proclaimed in all the places of concourse, and therefore in the gates, not only because through them people were continually passing and repassing, but because in them they kept their courts, and laid up their stores. It must be proclaimed (as the king or queen is usually proclaimed) at the court-gate first, the gate by which the kings of Judah come in, and go out, v. 19. Let them be told their duty first, particularly *this duty*; for if sabbaths be not sanctified as they should be, the rulers of Judah are to be contended with, (so they were, Neh. xiii. 17.) for they are certainly wanting in their duty. He must also preach it in all the gates of Jerusalem. It is a matter of great and general concern, therefore let all take notice of it. Let the kings of Judah hear the word of the Lord, for, high as they are, he is above them; and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for, mean as they are, he takes notice of them, and of what they say and do on sabbath-days. Observe,

1. How the sabbath is to be sanctified, and what is the law concerning it, v. 21, 22. (1.) They must rest from their worldly employment on the sabbath-day, must do no servile work. They must bear no burthen into the city, or out of it, into their houses, or out of them; husbandmen's burthens of corn must not be carried in, nor manure carried out; nor must tradesmen's burthens of wares or merchandises be imported or exported. There must not a loaded horse, or cart, or waggon, be seen on the sabbath-day, either in the streets or in the roads; the porters must not ply on that day, nor must the servants be suffered to fetch in provisions or fuel. It is a day of rest, and must not be made a day of labour,

unless in case of necessity. (2.) They must apply themselves to that which is the proper work and business of the day; "*Hallow ye the sabbath, consecrate it to the honour of God, and spend it in his service and worship.*" It is in order to this, that worldly business must be laid aside, that we may be *entire for, and intent upon*, that work which *requires and deserves* the whole man. (3.) They must herein be very circumspect; "*Take heed to yourselves, watch against every thing that borders upon the profanation of the sabbath.*" Where God is *jealous*, we must be *cautious*. "*Take heed to yourselves, for it is at your peril, if you rob God of that part of your time which he has reserved to himself.*" *Take heed to your souls*; so the word is; in order to the right sanctifying of sabbaths, we must look well to the frame of our spirits, and have a watchful eye upon all the motions of the inward man. Let not the soul be *burthened* with the cares of this world on sabbath-days, but let that be employed, even all that is within us, in the work of the day. And, (4.) He refers them to the law, the statute in this case made and provided; "*This is no new imposition upon you, but is what I commanded your fathers; it is an ancient law, it was an article of the original contract; nay, it was a command to the patriarchs.*"

2. How the sabbath had been profaned; (v. 23.) "*Your fathers were required to keep holy the sabbath-day; but they obeyed not, they hardened their necks against this as well as other commands that were given them.*" This is mentioned, to show that there needed a reformation in this matter, and that God had a just controversy with them for the long transgression of this law, which they had been guilty of. They hardened their necks against this command, that they might not *hear and receive instruction* concerning other commands. Where sabbaths are neglected, all religion sensibly goes to decay.

3. What blessings God had in store for them, if they would make conscience of sabbath-sanctification. Though their fathers had been guilty of the profanation of the sabbath, they should not only not smart for it, but their city and nation should recover its ancient glory, if they would keep sabbaths better, v. 24.—26. Let them take care to *hallow the sabbath, and do no work therein*; and then,

(1.) *The court shall flourish.* Kings in succession, or the many branches of the royal family at the same time, all as great as *kings*, with the other *princes* that sit upon the *thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David*, (Ps. cxxii. 5.) shall ride in great pomp *through the gates of Jerusalem*, some in chariots, and some on horses, attended with a numerous retinue of the men of Judah. Note, The honour of the government is the joy of the kingdom; and the support of religion would contribute greatly to both.

(2.) *The city shall flourish.* Let there be a face of religion kept up, in Jerusalem, by sabbath-sanctification, that it may answer to its title, *the holy city*, and then it *shall remain for ever*, shall for ever *be inhabited*; (so the word may be rendered;) it shall not be destroyed and dispeopled, as it is threatened to be. Whatever supports religion, tends to establish the civil interests of a land.

(3.) *The country shall flourish.* The *cities of Judah* and the *land of Benjamin* shall be replenished with vast numbers of inhabitants, and those abounding in plenty, and living in peace, which will appear by the multitude and value of their offerings which they shall present to God. By this the flourishing of a country may be judged of; What does it do for the honour of God? Those that starve their religion, either *are poor*, or are in a fair way to be so.

(4.) *The church shall flourish.* *Meat-offerings,*

and incense, and sacrifices of praise, shall be brought to the house of the Lord, for the maintenance of the service of that house, and the *servants* that attend it. God's institutions shall be conscientiously observed, no sacrifices and incense shall be offered to idols, and alienated from God, but every thing shall go in the right channel. They shall have both *occasion and hearts* to bring *sacrifices of praise* to God. This is made an instance of their prosperity. Then a people truly *flourish*, when religion flourishes among them. And this is the effect of sabbath-sanctification; when that branch of religion is kept up, other instances of it are kept up likewise, but when that is lost, devotion is lost either in superstition or in profaneness. It is a true observation which some have made, That the streams of all religion run either deep or shallow, according as the banks of the sabbath are kept up or neglected.

4. What judgments they must expect would come upon them, if they persisted in the profanation of the sabbath; (v. 27.) "*If you will not hearken to me in this matter, to keep the gates shut on sabbath-days, so that there may be no unnecessary entering in, or going out, on that day; if you will break through the enclosure of the divine law, and lay that day in common with other days, know that God will kindle a fire in the gates of your city;*" intimating, that it shall be kindled by an enemy besieging the city, and assaulting the *gates*, who shall take this course to force their entrance. Justly shall those gates be fired, that are not used as they ought to be, to shut out sin, and to keep people in to an attendance on their duty. The fire shall devour even the *palaces* of Jerusalem, where the princes and nobles dwell, who did not use their power and interest as they ought to have done, to keep up the honour of God's sabbaths; but it *shall not be quenched*, until it has laid the whole city in ruins. This was fulfilled by the army of the Chaldeans, ch. lii. 13. The profanation of the sabbath is a sin for which God has often contended with a people by fire.

CHAP. XVIII.

In this chapter, we have, I. A general declaration of God's ways in dealing with nations and kingdoms; that he can easily do what he will with them, as easily as the potter can with the clay; (v. 1.-6.) but that he certainly will do what is just and fair with them. If he threaten their ruin, yet, upon their repentance, he will return in mercy to them, and when he is coming toward them in mercy, nothing but their sin will stop the progress of his favours, v. 7.-10. II. A particular demonstration of the folly of the men of Judah and Jerusalem, in departing from their God to idols, and so bringing ruin upon themselves, notwithstanding the fair warnings given them, and God's kind intentions toward them, v. 11.-17. III. The prophet's complaint to God of the base ingratitude and unreasonable malice of his enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and his prayers against them, v. 18.-23.

1. **T**HE word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2. Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there will I cause thee to hear my words. 3. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. 4. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. 5. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 6. O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand

re ye in my hand, O house of Israel. 7. *what instant I shall speak concerning a on, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck and to pull down, and to destroy it:* 8. *hat nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent he evil that I thought to do unto them.* And *at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a king-ly, to build, and to plant it:* 10. *If it do in my sight, that it obey not my voice, I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them.*

The prophet is here sent to the *potter's house*, (he knew where to find it,) not to *preach* a sermon, as before to the gates of Jerusalem, but to *prepare* a sermon, or rather to receive it ready *prepared*. Those needed not to study their sermons, that had them, as he had this, by immediate inspiration. "Go to the *potter's house*, and observe how he manages his work, and there *I will cause thee, by silent whispers, to hear my words*. There thou shalt receive a message, to be delivered to the people." Note, Those that would know God's mind, must observe his appointments, and attend there where they may *hear his words*. The prophet was never *disobedient to the heavenly vision*, and therefore went to the potter's house, (v. 3.) and took notice how he *wrought his work upon the wheels*, just as he pleased, with a great deal of ease, and in a little time. And, (v. 4.) when a lump of clay that he designed to form into one shape, either proved too stiff, or had a stone in it, or some way or other came to be *marred in his hand*, he presently turned it into another shape; if it will not serve for a vessel of honour, it will serve for a vessel of dishonour, just as *seems good to the potter*. It is probable that Jeremiah knew well enough how the potter wrought his work, and how easily he threw it into what form he pleased; but he must go, and observe it *now*, that, having the idea of it fresh in his mind, he might the more readily and distinctly apprehend that truth which God designed thereby to represent to him, and might the more intelligently explain it to the people. God *used similitudes by his servants the prophets*, (Hos. xii. 10.) and it was requisite that they should themselves understand the similitudes they used. Ministers will make a good use of their converse with the business and affairs of this life, if they learn thereby to speak more plainly and familiarly to people about the things of God, and to expound scripture comparisons. For they ought to make all their knowledge, some way or other, serviceable to their profession.

Now let us see what the message is, which Jeremiah receives, and is intrusted with the delivery of, at the potter's house. While he looks carefully upon the potter's work, God darts into his mind these two great truths, which he must preach to the *house of Israel*,

1. That God has both an incontestable authority, and an irresistible ability, to form and fashion kingdoms and nations as he pleases, so as to serve his own purposes; "*Cannot I do with you as this potter, saith the Lord?*" v. 6. Have not I as absolute a power over you in respect both of might and of right?" Nay, God has a clearer title to a dominion over us than the potter has over the clay, for the potter only gives it its form, whereas we have both matter and form from God. *As the clay is in the potter's hand* to be moulded and shaped as he pleases, *so are ye in my hand*. This intimates, (1.) That

God has an incontestable sovereignty over us, is not Debtor to us, may dispose of us as he thinks fit, and is not accountable to us; and that it would be as absurd for us to dispute this as for the clay to quarrel with the potter. (2.) That it is a very easy thing with God to make what use he pleases of us, and what changes he pleases with us, and that we cannot resist him. One turn of the hand, one turn of the wheel, quite alters the shape of the clay, makes it a vessel, unmakes it, new-makes it. Thus are our times in *God's hand*, and not in our own, and it is in vain for us to strive with him. It is spoken here of nations; the most politic, the most potent, are what God is pleased to make them, and no other: see this explained by Job, (ch. xii. 23.) *He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them, he enlargeth the nations and straiteneth them again;* (Ps. cvii. 33, &c.) and compare Job xxxiv. *All nations before God are as the drop of the bucket, soon wiped away, or the small dust of the balance, soon blown away,* (Isa. xl. 15.) and therefore, no doubt, as easily managed as the clay by the potter. (3.) That God will not be a Loser by any in his glory, at long run, but that if he be not glorified *by them*, he will be glorified *upon them*. If the potter's vessel be *marred* for one use, it shall serve for another; those that will not be monuments of mercy, shall be monuments of justice: *The Lord has made all things for himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil*, Prov. xvi. 4. *God formed us out of the clay*, (Job xxxiii. 6.) nay, and we are still *as clay* in his hands; (Isa. lxiv. 8.) and has not he the same power over us, that the potter has over the clay? Rom. ix. 21. And are not we bound to submit, as the clay to the potter's wisdom, and will? Isa. xxix. 15, 16.—xlv. 9.

2. That, in the exercise of this authority and ability, he always goes by fixed rules of equity and goodness. He dispenses favours indeed in a way of sovereignty, but never punishes by arbitrary power. *High is his right hand*, yet he rules not with a *high hand*, but, as it follows there, *Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne*, Ps. lxxxi. 13, 14. God asserts his despotic power, and tells us what he *might do*, but at the same time assures us, that he will act as a righteous and merciful Judge.

(1.) When God is coming against us in ways of judgment, we may be sure that it is for our sins, which shall appear by this, that national repentance will stop the progress of the judgments; (v. 7, 8.) *If God speak concerning a nation, to pluck up its fences that secure it, and so lay it open, its fruit-trees that adorn and enrich it, and so leave it desolate; to pull down its fortifications, that the enemy may have liberty to enter in, its habitations, that the inhabitants may be under a necessity of going out, and so destroy it, as either a vineyard or a city is destroyed; in this case, if that nation take the alarm, and repent of its sins, and reform its lives, turn every one from his evil way, and return to God, God will return in mercy to them, and though he cannot change his mind, he will change his way, so that it may be said, He repents him of the evil he said he would do to them.* Thus often in the time of the Judges, when the oppressed people were penitent people, still God raised them up saviours; and when they turned to God, their affairs immediately took a new turn. It was Nineveh's case, and we wish it had oftener been Jerusalem's; see 2 Chron. vii. 14. It is an undoubted truth, that a sincere conversion from the evil of sin will be an effectual prevention of the evil of punishment; and God can as easily raise up a penitent people from their ruins, as the potter can make anew the vessel of clay, when it was *marred in his hand*.

(2.) When God is coming towards us in ways of mercy, if any stop be given to the progress of that

mercy, it is nothing but sin that gives it; (v. 9, 10.) *If God speak concerning a nation, to build and to plant it*, to advance and establish all the true interests of it, it is *his husbandry*, and *his building*, (1 Cor. iii. 9.) and if he speak in favour of it, it is done, it is increased, it is enriched, it is enlarged, its trade flourishes, its government is settled in good hands, and all its affairs prosper, and its enterprises succeed. But if this nation, which God had thus loaded with benefits, *do evil in his sight*, and *obey not his voice*; if it lose its virtue, and become debauched and profane; if religion grow into contempt, and vice get to be fashionable, and so be kept in countenance and reputation, and there be a general decay of serious godliness among them, then God will turn his hand against them, will *pluck up* what he was planting, and *pull down* what he was building; (ch. xlv. 4.) the good work that was in the doing, shall stand still, and be let fall; and what favours were further designed, shall be withheld, and this is called his *repenting of the good wherewith he said he would benefit them*, as he changed his purpose concerning Eli's house, (1 Sam. ii. 30.) and hurried Israel back into the wilderness, when he had brought them within sight of Canaan. Note, Sin is the great mischief-maker between God and a people; it forfeits the benefit of his promises, and spoils the success of their prayers. It defeats his kind intentions concerning them, (Hos. vii. 1.) and baffles their pleasing expectations from him. It ruins their comforts, prolongs their grievances, brings them into straits, and retards their deliverances, Isa. xlix. 1, 2.

11. Now, therefore, go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good. 12. And they said, There is no hope; but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart. 13. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Ask ye now among the heathen, who hath heard such things? the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing. 14. Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon *which cometh from the rock of the field*? or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken? 15. Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burnt incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways *from the ancient paths*, to walk in paths *in a way not cast up*; 16. To make their land desolate, and a perpetual hissing: every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head. 17. I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy: I will shew them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.

These verses seem to be the application of the general truths laid down in the foregoing part of the chapter, to the nation of the Jews and their present state.

I. God was now speaking concerning them, to *pluck up*, and to *pull down*, and to destroy; for it

is that part of the rule of judgment that their case agrees with; (v. 11.) “Go, and tell them,” (saith God,) “Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you.” Providence in all its operations is plainly working toward your ruin. Look upon your conduct toward God, and you cannot but see that you deserve it; look upon his dealings with you, and you cannot but see that he designs it.” He *frames evil*, as the potter *frames* the vessel, so as to answer the end.

II. He invites them by repentance and reformation to meet him in the way of his judgments, and so to prevent his further proceedings against them; “Return ye now every one from his evil ways, that so (according to the rule before laid down) God may turn from the evil he had proposed to do unto you, and that providence which seemed to have been framed like a vessel on the wheel against you, shall immediately be thrown into a new shape, and the issue shall be in favour of you.” Note, The warnings of God's word, and the threatenings of his providence, should be improved by us as strong inducements to us to reform our lives; in which it is not enough to *turn from our evil ways*, but we must *make our ways and our doings good, conformable to the rule, to the law*.

III. He foresees their obstinacy, and their perverse refusal to comply with this invitation, though it tended so much to their own benefit, v. 12. They said, “There is no hope. If we must not be delivered unless we return from our evil ways, we may even despair of ever being delivered, for we are resolved that *we will walk after our own devices*. It is to no purpose for the prophets to say any more to us, to use any more arguments, or to press the matter any further; we will have our way, whatever it cost us; *we will do every one the imagination of his own evil heart*, and will not be under the restraint of the divine law.” Note, That which ruins sinners, is, affecting to live as they list; they call it *liberty to live at large*, whereas for a man to be a slave to his lusts, is the worst of slaveries. See how strangely some men's hearts are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, that they will not so much as promise amendment; nay, they set the judgments of God at defiance; “We will go on with *our own devices*, and let God go on with *his*; and we will venture the issue.”

IV. He upbraids them with the monstrous folly of their obstinacy, and their hating to be reformed. Surely never were people guilty of such an absurdity, never any that pretended to reason, acted so unreasonably; (v. 13.) *Ask ye among the heathen*, even those that had not the benefit of divine revelation, no oracles, no prophets, as Judah and Jerusalem had, yet, even among them, *who hath heard such a thing?* The Ninevites, when thus warned, turned from their evil ways. Some of the worst of men, when they are told of their faults, especially when they begin to smart for them, will at least promise reformation, and say that they will endeavour to mend. But the virgin of Israel bids defiance to repentance, is resolved to go on proudly, whatever conscience and Providence say to the contrary, and thus *hath done a horrible thing*. She should have preserved herself pure and chaste for God, who had espoused her to himself; but she has alienated herself from him, and refuses to return to him. Note. It is a *horrible thing*, enough to make one tremble to think of it, that these who have made their condition sad by sinning, should make it desperate by refusing to reform. Wilful impenitence is the grossest self-murder; and that is a *horrible thing*, which we should abhor the thought of.

He shows their folly in two things:

1. In the nature of the sin itself that they were guilty of. They forsook God for idols, which was

the most horrible thing that could be, for they put a cheat upon themselves, v. 14, 15. *Will a thirsty traveller leave the snow, which, being melted, runs down from the mountains of Lebanon, and, passing over the rock of the field, flows in clear, clean, crystal streams? Will he leave these, pass these by, and think to mend himself with some dirty puddle-water? Or, Shall the cold flowing waters that come from any other place, be forsaken in the heat of summer? No; when men are parched with heat and drought, and meet with cooling, refreshing streams, they will make use of them, and not turn their backs upon them.* The margin reads it, "*Will a man that is travelling the road, leave my fields, which are plain and level, for a rock, which is rough and hard, or for the snow of Lebanon, which, lying in great drifts, makes the road unpassable? Or, shall the running waters be forsaken for the strange cold waters?*" No; in these things men know when they are well off, and will keep so: they will not leave a certainty for an uncertainty; but *my people have forgotten me, (v. 15.)* have quitted a *Fountain of living waters for broken cisterns; they have burnt incense to idols, that are as vain as vanity itself, that are not what they pretend to be, nor can perform what is expected from them.*" They had not the common wit of travellers, but even their leaders caused them to err, and they were content to be misled. (1.) They left the ancient paths, which were appointed by the divine law, which had been walked in by all the saints, which were therefore the right way to their journey's end, a safe way, and, being well tracked, was both easy to hit, and easy to walk in. But when they were advised to keep to the good old way, they positively said that they would not, ch. vi. 16. (2.) They chose by-paths; they walked in a way not cast up; not in the highway, the King's highway, in which they might travel safely, and which would certainly lead them to their right end, but in a dirty way, a rough way, a way in which they could not but stumble; such was the way of idolatry; such is the way of all iniquity; it is a false way, it is a way full of stumbling-blocks; and yet this way they chose to walk in, and lead others in.

2. In the mischievous consequences of it. Though the thing itself had been bad, they might have had some excuse for it, if they could have promised themselves any good out of it. But the direct tendency of it was to make their land desolate, and, consequently, themselves miserable, (for so the inhabitants must needs be, if their country be laid waste,) and both themselves and their land a perpetual hissing. Those deserve to be hissed, that have fair warning given them, and will not take it. *Every one that passes by their land shall make his remarks upon it, and shall be astonished, and wag his head; some wondering at, others commiserating, others triumphing in, the desolations of a country that had been the glory of all lands.* They shall wag their heads in derision, upbraiding them with their folly in forsaking God and their duty, and so pulling this misery upon their own heads. Note, Those that revolt from God will justly be made the scorn of all about them; and, having reproached the Lord, will themselves be a reproach. *Their land being made desolate, in pursuance of their destruction, it is threatened, (v. 17.) I will scatter them as with an east-wind, which is fierce and violent; by it they shall be hurried to and fro before the enemy, and find no way open to escape.* They shall not only flee before the enemy, (that they may do, and yet make an orderly retreat,) but they shall be scattered, some one way, and some another. That which completes their misery, is, *I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.* Our calamities may be easily borne, if

God look towards us, and smile upon us, when we are under them, if he countenance us, and show us favour; but if he turn the back upon us, if he show himself displeased, if he be deaf to our prayers, and refuse us his help; if he forsake us, leave us to ourselves, and stand at a distance from us, we are quite undone. *If he hide his face, who then can behold him?* Job xxxiv. 39. Herein God would deal with them as they had dealt with him; (ch. ii. 27.) *They have turned their back unto me, and not their face.* It is a righteous thing with God to show himself strange to those in the day of their trouble, who have showed themselves rude and undutiful to him in their prosperity. This will have its full accomplishment in that day, when God will say to those, who, though they have been professors of piety, were yet workers of iniquity, *Depart from me, I know you not, nay, I never knew you.*

18. Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet: come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words. 19. Give heed to me, O LORD, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me. 20. Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them. 21. Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and let their men be put to death; let their young men be slain by the sword in battle. 22. Let a cry be heard from their houses, when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them; for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet. 23. Yet, LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me: forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight; but let them be overthrown before thee: deal thus with them in the time of thine anger.

The prophet here, as sometimes before, brings in his own affairs, but very much for instruction to us.

1. See here what are the common methods of the persecutors. We may see this in Jeremiah's enemies, v. 18.

1. They laid their heads together, to consult what they should do against him, both to be revenged on him for what he had said, and to stop his mouth for the future. *They said, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah.* The enemies of God's people and ministers have been often very crafty themselves, and confederate with one another, to do them mischief. What they cannot act to the prejudice of religion separately, they will try to do in concert. *The wicked plots against the just.* Caiaphas, and the chief priests and elders, did so against our blessed Saviour himself. The opposition which the gates of hell give to the kingdom of heaven, is carried on with a great deal of cursed policy. God had said, (v. 11.) *I devise a device against you;* and now, as if they resolved to be quits with him,

and to outwit Infinite Wisdom itself, they resolve to devise devices against God's prophet, not only against his person, but against the word he delivered to them, which they thought by their subtle management to defeat. O the prodigious madness of those that hope to disannul God's counsel!

2. Herein they pretended a mighty zeal for the church, which, they suggested, was in danger, if Jeremiah was tolerated to preach as he did; "*Come,*" say they, let us silence and crush him, *for the law shall not perish from the priest: the law of truth is in their mouths,* (Mal. ii. 6.) and there we will seek it; the administration of ordinances according to the law is in their hands, and neither the one nor the other shall be wrested from them. *Counsel shall not perish from the wise;* the administration of public affairs shall always be lodged with the privy-counsellors and ministers of state, to whom it belongs; *nor shall the word perish from the prophets;* they mean those of their own choosing, who prophesied to them smooth things, and flattered them with visions of peace. Two things they insinuated, (1.) That Jeremiah could not be himself a true prophet, but was a pretender and a usurper, because he was neither commissioned by the priests, nor concurred with the other prophets, whose authority therefore will be despised, if he be suffered to go on. If Jeremiah be regarded as an oracle, farewell the reputation of our priests, our wise men and prophets; but *that* must be supported, which is reason enough why he must be suppressed. (2.) That the matter of his prophecies could not be from God, because it reflected sometimes upon the prophets and priests; he had charged them with being the ringleaders of all the mischief, (*ch. v. 31.*) and deceiving the people; (*ch. xiv. 14.*) he had foretold that their heart should perish, and be astonished, (*ch. iv. 9.*) that the wise men should be dismayed, (*ch. viii. 9, 10.*) that the priests and prophets should be intoxicated; (*ch. xiii. 13.*) now this galled them more than anything else; presuming upon the promise of God's presence with their priests and prophets, they could not believe that he would ever leave them. The guides of the church must needs be infallible, and therefore he who foretold their being infatuated, must be condemned as a false prophet. Thus, under colour of zeal for the church, have its best friends been run down.

3. They agreed to do all they could to blast his reputation; "*Come, let us smite him with the tongue,* fasten a bad character upon him, represent him to some as despicable, and fit to be slighted; to others, as dangerous, and fit to be prosecuted; to all, as odious, and not fit to be tolerated." This was their device, *fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhaerebit—to throw the vilest calumnies at him, in hope that some would adhere,* to dress him up in bear-skins, otherwise they could not bait him. They who projected this, it is likely, were men of figure, whose tongue was no small slander, whose representations, though ever so false, would be credited both by princes and people, to make him obnoxious to the justice of the one and the fury of the other. The scourge of such tongues will give not only smart lashes, but deep wounds; it is a great mercy therefore to be hid from it, Job v. 21.

4. To set others an example, they resolve that they would not themselves regard any thing he said, though it appeared ever so weighty, and ever so well confirmed as a message from God; *Let us not give heed to any of his words;* for, right or wrong, they will look upon them to be *his words*, and not the words of God. What good can be done with those who hear the word of God with a resolution not to heed it, or believe it? Nay,

5. That they may effectually silence him, they resolve to be the death of him; (*v. 23.*) *All their*

counsel against me is to slay me; they hunt for the precious life; and a precious life indeed it was that they hunted for. Long was this Jerusalem's wretched character. *Thou that killest many of the prophets,* and wouldst have killed them all.

II. See here what is the common relief of the persecuted. This we may see in the course that Jeremiah took, when he met with this hard usage. He immediately applied himself to his God by prayer, and so gave himself ease.

1. He referred himself and his cause to God's cognizance, *v. 19.* They would not regard a word he said, would not admit his complaints, or take any notice of his grievances; but, *Lord,* (says he,) *do thou give heed to me.* It is matter of comfort to faithful ministers, that, if men will not give heed to their preaching, yet God will give heed to their praying. He appeals to God as an impartial Judge, that will hear both sides, as every judge ought to do; "*Do not only give heed to me, but hearken to the voice of them that contend with me;* hear what they have to say against me, and for themselves, and then make it to appear that thou sittest in the throne, judging right. Hear the voice of my contenters, how noisy and clamorous they are, how false and malicious all they say is, and let them be judged out of their own mouth; cause their own tongues to fall upon them."

2. He complains of their base ingratitude to him; (*v. 20.*) "*Shall evil be recompensed for good, and shall it yet go unpunished? Wilt not thou recompense me good for that evil?*" 2 Sam. xvi. 12. To render good for good is human, evil for evil is brutish, good for evil is Christian, but evil for good is devilish; it is so very absurd and wicked a thing, that we cannot think but God will avenge it. See how great the evil was, that they did against him; *they digged a pit for his soul;* they aimed to take away his life, no less would satisfy them, and that, not in a generous way, by an open assault, against which he might have an opportunity of defending himself, but in a base, cowardly, clandestine way, *they digged pits for him,* which there was no fence against, Ps. cxix. 85. But see how great the good was, which he had done for them; *Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them;* he had been an intercessor with God for them, had used his interest in heaven on their behalf, which was the greatest kindness they could expect from one of his character. *He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee,* Gen. xx. 7. Moses often did this for Israel, and yet they quarrelled with him, and sometimes *spoke of stoning him.* He did them this kindness when they were in imminent danger of destruction, and most needed it. They had themselves provoked God's wrath against them, and it was ready to break in upon them, but he stood in the gap, (as Moses, Ps. cvi. 23.) and turned away that wrath. Now, (1.) This was very base in them. Call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse. But it was not strange that they who had forgotten their God, did not know their best friends. (2.) It was very grievous to him, as the like was to David; (Ps. xxxv. 13.—cxix. 4.) *For my love they are my adversaries.* Thus disingenuously do sinners deal with the great Intercessor, crucifying him afresh, and speaking against him on earth, while his blood is speaking for them in heaven. See John x. 32. But, (3.) It was a comfort to the prophet, that, when they were so spiteful against him, he had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had done his duty to them; and the same will be our rejoicing in such a day of evil. *The blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul,* Prov. xxix. 10.

3. He imprecates the judgments of God upon them, not from a revengeful disposition, but in a

prophetical indignation against their horrid wickedness, v. 21.—23. He prays, (1.) That their families might be starved for want of bread; *Deliver up their children to the famine*, to the famine in the country for want of rain, and that in the city through the straitness of the siege. Thus let this iniquity of the fathers be visited upon the children. (2.) That they might be cut off *by the sword of war*, which, whatever it was in the enemy's hand, would be, in God's hand, a sword of justice; "*Pour them out* (so the word is) *by the hands of the sword*; let *their blood* be shed as profusely as water, that *their wives* may be left childless and widows, their husbands being taken away by death;" (some think that the prophet refers to *pestilence*); *let their young men*, that are the strength of this generation, and the hope of the next, *be slain by the sword in battle*. (3.) That the terrors and desolations of war might seize them suddenly and by surprise, that thus their punishment might answer to their sin; (v. 22.) "*Let a cry be heard from their houses*, loud shrieks, *when thou shalt bring a troop of the Chaldeans suddenly upon them*, to seize them and all they have, to make them prisoners, and their estates a prey;" for thus they would have done by Jeremiah, they aimed to ruin him at once ere he was aware; "*They have digged a pit for me*, as for a wild beast, and have hid snares for me, as for some ravenous, noxious fowl." Note, They that think to insnare others, will justly be themselves insnared in an evil time. (4.) That they might be dealt with according to the desert of this sin which was without excuse; "*Forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight*; let them not escape the just punishment of it; let them lie under all the miseries of those whose sins are unpardoned." (5.) That God's wrath against them might be their ruin; *Let them be overthrown before thee*. This intimates, that justice is in pursuit of them, that they endeavour to make their escape from it, but in vain; they shall be made to stumble in their flight, and, being overthrown, they will certainly be overtaken." And then, Lord, in the time of thine anger, do to them, (he does not say what he would have done to them, but,) do to them as thou thinkest fit, as thou used to do with those whom thou art angry with; *deal thus with them*.

Now this is not written for our imitation. Jeremiah was a prophet, and, by the impulse of the spirit of prophecy, in the foresight of the ruin certainly coming upon his persecutors, might pray such prayers as we may not; and if we think, by this example, to justify ourselves in such imprecations, we know not what manner of spirit we are of: our Master has taught us, by his precept and pattern, to bless them that curse us, and pray for them that despitefully use us; yet it is written for our instruction, and is of use to teach us, [1.] That those who have forfeited the benefit of the prayers of God's prophets for them, may justly expect to have their prayers against them. [2.] That persecution is a sin that fills the measure of a people's iniquity very fast, and will bring as sure and sore a destruction upon them as any other. [3.] Those who will not be won upon by the kindness of God and his prophets, will certainly at length feel the just resentments of both.

CHAP. XIX.

The same melancholy theme is the subject of this chapter, that was of those foregoing—the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem for their sins; Jeremiah had often foretold this; here he has particular full orders to do it again. I. He must set their sins in order before them, as he had often done, especially their idolatry, v. 4, 5. II. He must describe the particular judgments which were now coming apace upon them for these sins, v. 6, 7, 9. III. He must do this in the valley of Tophet, with great

solemnity, and for some particular reasons, v. 2, 3. IV. He must summon a company of the elders together, to be witnesses of this, v. 1. V. He must confirm this, and endeavour to affect his hearers with it, by a sign, which was, the breaking of an earthen bottle, signifying that they should be dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel, v. 10, 13. VI. When he had done this in the valley of Tophet, he ratified it in the court of the temple, v. 14, 15. Thus were all likely means tried to awaken this stupid, senseless people to repentance, that their ruin might be prevented; but all in vain.

1. **T**HUS saith the LORD, Go, and get a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests, 2. And go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the east gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee; 3. And say, Hear ye the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle. 4. Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burnt incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents; 5. They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind: 6. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor, The valley of the son of Hinnom, but, The valley of slaughter. 7. And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives; and their carcases will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. 8. And I will make this city desolate, and a hissing: every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss, because of all the plagues thereof. 9. And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons, and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend, in the siege and straitness wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.

The corruption of man having made it necessary that *precept should be upon precept, and line upon line*, (so unapt are we to receive, and so very apt to let slip, the things of God,) the grace of God has provided that there shall be, accordingly, *precept upon precept, and line upon line*, that those who are irreclaimable may be inexcusable. For this reason, the prophet here is sent with a message to the same purport with what he had often delivered, but with some circumstances that might make it the more taken notice of, a thing which ministers

should study, for a little circumstance may sometimes be a great advantage, and they that would win souls, must be wise.

1. He must take of the elders and chief men, both in church and state, to be his auditors, and witnesses to what he said; *the ancients of the people, and the ancients of the priests*, the most eminent men both in the magistracy, and in the ministry, that they might be *faithful witnesses, to record*, as those, Isa. viii. 2. It is strange that these great men would be at the beck of a poor prophet, and obey his summons to attend him out of the city, they knew not whither, and they knew not why. But, though the generality of the elders were disaffected to him, yet it is likely that there were some few among them, who looked upon him as a prophet of the Lord, and would pay this respect to the heavenly vision. Note, Persons of rank and figure have an opportunity of honouring God by a diligent attendance on the ministry of the word, and other divine institutions; and they ought to think it an honour, and no disparagement to themselves, yea, though the circumstances be mean and despicable. It is certain that the greatest of men is less than the least of the ordinances of God.

2. He must go to the valley of the son of Hinnom, and deliver this message there; for the word of the Lord is not bound to any one place; as good a sermon may be preached in the valley of Tophet as in the gate of the temple. Christ preached on a mountain, and out of a ship. This valley lay partly on the south side of Jerusalem, but the prophet's way to it was *by the entry of the east gate, the sun-gate*, (v. 2.) so some render it, and suppose it to look not toward the sun-rising, but the noon-sun: *the potter's gate*; so some. This sermon must be preached in that place, in the valley of the son of Hinnom, (1.) Because there they had been guilty of the vilest of their idolatries, the sacrificing of their children to Moloch, a horrid piece of impiety, which the sight of the place might serve to remind them of, and upbraid them with. (2.) Because there they should feel the sorest of their calamities; there the greatest slaughter should be made among them; and it being the common sink of the city, let them look upon it, and see what a miserable spectacle this magnificent city would be, when it should be all like the valley of Tophet. God bids him go thither, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee, when thou comest thither; whereby it appears, (as Mr. Gataker well observes,) that God's messages were frequently not revealed to the prophets before the very instant of time wherein they were to deliver them.

3. He must give general notice of a general ruin now shortly coming upon Judah and Jerusalem, v. 3. He must, as those that make proclamations, begin with an "Oyes, Hear ye the word of the Lord, though it be a terrible word, for you may thank yourselves if it be so." Both rulers and ruled must attend to it, at their peril; the kings of Judah, the king and his sons, the king and his princes, and privy-counsellors, they must hear the word of the King of kings, for high as they are, he is above them. The inhabitants of Jerusalem also must hear what God has to say to them. Both princes and people have contributed to the national guilt, and must concur in the national repentance, or they will both share in the national ruin. Let them all know that the Lord of hosts, who is therefore able to do what he threatens, though he is the God of Israel, nay, because he is so, will therefore punish them in the first place for their iniquities; (Amos iii. 2.) *He will bring evil upon this place*, upon Judah and Jerusalem, so surprising, and so dreadful, that *whoever hears it, his ears shall tingle*; whosoever hears the prediction of it, hears the report and represen-

tation of it, it shall make such an impression of terror upon him, that he shall still think he hears it sounding in his ears, and shall not be able to get it out of his mind. The ruin of Eli's house is thus described, (1 Sam. iii. 11.) and of Jerusalem, 2 Kings xxi. 12.

4. He must plainly tell them what their sins were, for which God had this controversy with them; (v. 4, 5.) they were, apostasy from God; *They have forsaken me*; abuse of the privileges of the visible church, with which they had been dignified; *They have estranged this place*. Jerusalem, the holy city, the temple, the holy house, which were designed for the honour of God, and the support of his kingdom among men, they had alienated from those purposes and (as some render the word) *they had strangely abused*. They had so polluted both with their wickedness, that God had disowned both, and abandoned them to ruin. He charges them with an affection for, and the adoration of, false gods, such as *neither they nor their fathers have known*, such as never had recommended themselves to their belief and esteem by any acts of power or goodness done for them or their ancestors, as that God had abundantly done, whom they forsook; yet they took them at a venture for their gods; nay, being fond of change and novelty, they liked them the better for their being upstarts; and new fashions in religion were as grateful to their fancies as in other things. They also stand charged with murder, wilful murder, from malice prepense; *They have filled this place with the blood of innocents*. It was Manasseh's sin, (2 Kings, xxiv. 4.) *which the Lord would not pardon*. Nay, as if idolatry and murder, committed separately, were not bad enough, and affront enough to God and man, they have put them together, have consolidated them into one complicated crime, that of *burning their children in the fire to Baal*, (v. 5.) which was the most insolent defiance to all the laws both of natural and revealed religion that ever mankind was guilty of; and by it they openly declared that they loved their new gods better than ever they loved the true God, though they were such cruel taskmasters, that they required human sacrifices, inhuman I should call them, which the Lord Jehovah, whose all lives and souls are, never demanded from his worshippers; he never *shake* of such a thing, nor *came it into his mind*. See ch. vii. 31.

5. He must endeavour to affect them with the greatness of the desolation that was coming upon them. He must tell them, (as he had done before, ch. vii. 32.) that this valley of the son of Hinnom shall acquire a new name, *the valley of slaughter*, (v. 6.) for (v. 7.) multitudes shall fall there by the sword, when either they sally out upon the besiegers, and are repulsed, or attempt to make their escape, and are seized; *They shall fall before their enemies*, who not only endeavour to make themselves masters of their houses and estates, but have such an implacable enmity to them, that they seek their lives, they thirst after their blood, and, when they are dead, will not allow a cartel for the burying of the slain, but *their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven and beasts of the earth*. What a dismal place will the valley of Tophet be then! And as for those that remain within the city, and will not capitulate with the besiegers, they shall perish for want of food, when first they have eaten the flesh of their sons and daughters, and dearest friends, through the straitness wherewith their enemies shall straiten them, v. 9. This was threatened in the law, as an instance of the extremity to which the judgments of God should reduce them, (Lev. xxvi. 29. Deut. xxviii. 33.) and was accomplished, Lam. iv. 10. And lastly, the whole city shall be desolate, the houses laid in ashes, the inhabitants

slain, or taken prisoners; there shall be no resort to it, nor any thing in it but what looks rueful and horrid; so that *every one that passes by shall be astonished*, (v. 8.) as he had said before, *ch. xviii. 16.* That place which holiness had made *the joy of the whole earth*, sin had made the reproach and shame of the whole earth.

6. He must assure them that all their attempts to prevent and avoid this ruin, so long as they continued impenitent and unreformed, would be fruitless and vain; (v. 7.) *I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem*, of the princes and senators of *Judah and Jerusalem, in this place*, in the royal palace, which lay on the south side of the city, not far from the place where the prophet now stood. Note, There is no fleeing from God's justice, but by fleeing to his mercy. They that will not make good God's counsel, by humbling themselves under his mighty hand, *God will make void their counsel*, and blast their projects, which they think ever so well concerted for their own preservation. There is *no counsel or strength against the Lord*.

10. Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee, 11. And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Even so will I break this people, and this city, as *one* breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again; and they shall bury them in Tophet, till there be no place else to bury. 12. Thus will I do unto this place, saith the LORD, and to the inhabitants thereof, and *even* make their city as Tophet: 13. And the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall be defiled, as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burnt incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink-offerings unto other gods. 14. Then came Jeremiah from Tophet, whither the LORD had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the LORD's house, and said to all the people, 15. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring upon this city, and upon all her towns, all the evil that I have pronounced against it; because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words.

The message of wrath delivered in the foregoing verses is here enforced, that it might gain credit, two ways.

I. By a visible sign. The prophet was to take along with him an *earthen bottle*, (v. 1.) and when he had delivered his message, he was to *break the bottle* to pieces, (v. 10.) and the same that were auditors of the sermon, must be spectators of the sign. He had compared this people, in the chapter before, to the potter's clay, which is easily marred in the making; but some might say, "It is past that with us, we have been made and hardened long since." "And what though you be," says he, "the potter's vessel is as soon broken in the hand of any man, as the vessel while it is soft clay is marred in the potter's hand, and its case is, in this respect much worse; that the vessel, while it is soft clay, though it be marred, may be moulded again, but after it is hardened, when it is broken, it can never be pieced again." Perhaps what they see will affect them

more than what they only hear talk of; that is the intention of sacramental signs, and teaching by symbols was anciently used. In the explication of this sign, he must inculcate what he had before said, with a further reference to the place where this was done, in the valley of *Tophet*.

1. As the bottle was easily, irresistibly, and irrecoverably broken, so shall *Judah and Jerusalem* be broken by the Chaldean army, v. 11. They depended much upon the firmness of their constitution, and the fixedness of their courage, which they thought hardened them like a vessel of brass; but the prophet shows that all that did but harden them like a vessel of earth, which, though hard, is brittle, and sooner broken than that which is not so hard. Though they were made vessels of honour, still they were vessels of earth, and so they shall be made to know, if they dishonour God and themselves, and serve not the purposes for which they were made. It is God himself who made them that resolves to unmake them; *I will break this people, and this city*, dash them in pieces like a *potter's vessel*; the doom of the heathen, (Ps. ii. 9. Rev. ii. 27.) but now Jerusalem's doom, Isa. xxx. 14. *A potter's vessel*, when once broken, *cannot be made whole again; cannot be cured*, so the word is. The ruin of Jerusalem shall be an utter ruin; no hand can repair it, but his that broke it; and if they return to him, though he has torn, he will heal.

2. This was done in *Tophet* to signify two things, (1.) That *Tophet* should be the receptacle of the slain; *They shall burn in Tophet, for want of room to bury elsewhere*; (so some read it;) and if they had had conveniences any where else, they would not have buried there, where all the filth of the city was carried. Or, as we read it, *They shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place to bury any more there*; they shall juggle for room to lay their dead; and a very little room will then serve these, who, while they lived, *laid house to house, and field to field*. They that would be *placed alone in the midst of the earth*, while they were above ground, and obliged all about them to keep their distance, must lie with the multitude when they are under ground, for they are innumerable before them.

(2.) That *Tophet* should be a resemblance of the whole city; (v. 12.) *I will make this city as Tophet*. As they had filled the valley of *Tophet* with the slain which they sacrificed to their idols, so God will fill the whole city with the slain, that shall fall as sacrifices to the justice of God. We read (2 Kings xxiii. 10.) of *Josiah's defiling Tophet*, because it had been abused to idolatry; which he did, (as should seem, v. 14.) by *filling it with the bones of men*; and, whatever it was before, thenceforward it was looked upon as a detestable place. Dead carcases, and other filth of the city, were carried thither, and a fire continually kept there, for the burning of it. This was the posture of that valley, when Jeremiah was sent thither to prophesy; and so execrable a place was it looked upon to be, that, in the language of our Saviour's time, hell was called, in allusion to it, *Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom*. "Now," (says God,) "since that blessed reformation, when *Tophet* was defiled, did not proceed as it ought to have done, nor prove a thorough reformation, but though the idols in *Tophet* were abolished and made odious, those in Jerusalem remained, therefore will I do with the city as Josiah did by *Tophet*, fill it with the bodies of men, and make it an heap of rubbish." Even the *houses of Jerusalem*, and those of the *kings of Judah*, the royal palaces not excepted, *shall be defiled as the place of Tophet*, (v. 13.) and for the same reason, because of the idolatries that have been committed there; since they will not defile them by a reformation, God will defile them by a destruction, *because upon the roofs*

of their houses they have burnt incense unto the host of heaven. The flat roofs of their houses were sometimes used by devout people as convenient places for prayer, (Acts x. 6.) and by idolaters they were used as high places, on which they sacrificed to strange gods, especially to the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, that there they might be so much nearer to them, and have a clearer and fuller view of them. We read of those that worshipped the host of heaven on the house-tops, (Zeph. i. 5.) and of altars on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, 2 Kings xxiii. 12. This sin upon the house-tops brought a curse into the house, which consumed it, and made it a dunghill like Tophet.

II. By a solemn recognition and ratification of what he had said in the court of the Lord's house, v. 14, 15. The prophet returned from Tophet to the temple, which stood upon the hill over that valley, and there confirmed, and, probably, repeated, what he had said in the valley of Tophet, for the benefit of those who had not heard it: what he had said he would stand to. Here, as often before, he both assures them of judgments coming upon them, and assigns the cause of them, which was their sin. Both these are here put together in a little compass, with a reference to all that had gone before. 1. The accomplishment of the prophecies is here the judgment threatened. The people flattered themselves with a conceit that God would be better than his word; the threatening was but to frighten them, and keep them in awe a little; but the prophet tells them that they deceive themselves if they think so; *For thus saith the Lord of hosts*, who is able to make his words good, *I will bring upon this city, and upon all her towns*, all the lesser cities that belong to Jerusalem the metropolis, *all the evil that I have pronounced against it*. Note, Whatever men may think to the contrary, the executions of Providence will fully answer the predictions of the word; and God will appear as terrible against sin and sinners as the scripture makes him; nor shall the unbelief of men make either his promise or his threatenings of no effect, or of less effect than it was thought to be of. 2. The contempt of the prophecies is here the sin charged upon them, as the procuring cause of this judgment. It is *because they have hardened their necks*, and would not bow and bend them to the yoke of God's commands, would not *hear my words*, would not heed them, and yield obedience to them. Note, The obstinacy of sinners in their sinful ways, is altogether their own fault; if their necks are hardened, it is their own act and deed, they have hardened them; if they are deaf to the word of God, it is because they have stopped their own ears. We have need therefore to pray that God, by his grace, would deliver us from hardness of heart, and contempt of his word and commandments.

CHAP. XX.

Such plain dealing as Jeremiah used in the foregoing chapter, one might easily foresee, if it did not convince and humble men, would provoke and exasperate them; and so it did; for here we find, I. Jeremiah persecuted by Pashur, for preaching that sermon, v. 1, 2. II. Pashur threatened for so doing, and the word, which Jeremiah had preached, confirmed, v. 3..6. III. Jeremiah complaining to God concerning it and the other instances of hard measure that he had since he began to be a prophet, and the grievous temptation he had struggled with, (v. 7..10.) encouraging himself in God, lodging his appeal with him, not doubting but that he shall yet praise him, by which it appears that he had much grace, (v. 11..13.) and yet peevishly cursing the day of his birth, (v. 14..18.) by which it appears that he had sad remainders of corruption in him too, and was a man subject to like passions as we are.

I. **N**OW Pashur, the son of Immer the priest, who was also the chief gover-

nor in the house of the LORD, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things. 2. Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the LORD. 3. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The LORD hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib. 4. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends; and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword. 5. Moreover, I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon. 6. And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thy house, shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.

Here is,

I. Pashur's unjust displeasure against Jeremiah, and the fruits of that displeasure, v. 1, 2. This Pashur was a priest, and therefore, one would think, should have protected Jeremiah, who was of his own order, a priest too; and the more, because he was a prophet of the Lord, whose interests the priests, his ministers, ought to consult: but this priest was a persecutor of him whom he should have patronized. He was the son of Immer; he was of the sixteenth course of the priests, of which Immer, when these courses were first settled by David, was father, (1 Chron. xxiv. 14.) as Zechariah was of the order of Abiah, Luke i. 5. Thus this Pashur is distinguished from another of the same name, mentioned ch. xxi. 1. who was of the fifth course. This Pashur was chief governor in the temple; perhaps he was only so *pro tempore*—for a short period, the course he was head of being now in waiting; or he was suffragan to the High Priest; or, perhaps, captain of the temple, or of the guards about it, Acts iv. 1. This was Jeremiah's great enemy. The greatest malignity to God's prophets was found among those that professed sanctity, and concern for God and the church.

We cannot suppose that Pashur was one of those ancients of the priests that went with Jeremiah to the valley of Tophet, to hear him prophesy, unless it were with a malicious design to take advantage against him; but when he came into the courts of the Lord's house, it is probable that he was himself a witness of what he said, and so it may be read, (v. 1.) *He heard Jeremiah prophesying these things*. As we read it, the information was brought him by others, whose examinations he took; *He heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things*, and could not bear it; especially that he should dare to preach in the courts of the Lord's house, where he was chief governor, without his leave. When power in the

church is abused, it is the most dangerous power that can be employed against it. Being incensed at Jeremiah, 1. He *smote* him, struck him with his hand, or staff of authority. Perhaps it was a blow intended only to disgrace him, like that which the High Priest ordered to be given Paul; (Acts xxiii. 2.) he struck him on the mouth, and bade him hold his prating. Or, perhaps, he gave him many blows intended to hurt him; he beat him severely, as a malefactor. It is charged upon the husbandmen, (Matth. xxi. 35.) that they beat the servants. The method of proceeding here was illegal; the High Priest, and the rest of the priests, ought to have been consulted, Jeremiah's credentials examined, and the matter inquired into, whether he had an authority to say what he said. But these rules of justice are set aside, and despised, as mere formalities; right or wrong, Jeremiah must be run down. The enemies of piety would never suffer themselves to be bound by the laws of equity. 2. He *put him in the stocks*. Some make it only a place of confinement; he imprisoned him. It rather seems to be an instrument of closer restraint, and intended to put him both to pain and shame. Some think it was a pillory for his neck and arms; others (as we) a pair of stocks for his legs; whatever engine it was, he continued in it all night, and in a public place too, *in the high gate of Benjamin, which was in, or by the house of the Lord*; probably, a gate through which they passed between the city and the temple. Pashur intended thus to chastise him, that he might deter him from prophesying; and thus to expose him to contempt, and render him odious, that he might not be regarded if he did prophesy. Thus have the best men met with the worst treatment from this ungracious, ungrateful world; and the greatest blessings of their age have been counted as the *off-scouring of all things*. Would it not raise a pious indignation, to see such a man as Pashur upon the bench, and such a man as Jeremiah in the stocks? It is well that there is another life after this, when persons and things will appear with another face.

II. God's just displeasure against Pashur, and the tokens of it. *On the morrow, Pashur gave Jeremiah his discharge, brought him out of the stocks*; (v. 3.) it is probable that he continued him there, in little ease, as long as was usual to continue any in that punishment. And now Jeremiah has a message from God to him. We do not find that, when Pashur put Jeremiah in the stocks, the latter gave him any check for what he did; he appears to have quietly and silently submitted to the abuse; *when he suffered, he threatened not*: but, when he brought him out of the stocks, then God put a word into the prophet's mouth, which would awaken his conscience, if he had any. For when the prophet of the Lord was bound, *the word of the Lord was not*.—What can we think Pashur aimed at, in smiting and abusing Jeremiah? Whatever it is, we shall see by what God says to him, that he is disappointed.

1. Did he aim to establish himself, and make himself easy, by silencing one that told of his faults, and would be likely to lessen his reputation with the people? He shall not gain this point; for, (1.) Though the prophet should be silent, his own conscience shall fly in his face, and make him always uneasy. To confirm this, he shall have a name given him, *Magor-missabib—Terror round about, or, Fear on every side*. God himself shall give him this name, whose calling him so, will make him so. It seems to be a proverbial expression, bespeaking a man not only in distress, but in despair; not only in *danger* on every side, (that a man may be, and yet by faith may be in no terror, as David, Ps. iii. 6. xxvii. 3.) but in *fear* on every side; and that a man

may be when there appears no danger; *The wicked flee when no man pursues*; are in great fear where no fear is. This shall be Pashur's case; (v. 4.) "*Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself*; thou shalt be subject to continual frights, and thy own fancy and imagination shall create thee a constant uneasiness." Note, God can make the most daring sinner a terror to himself, and will find out a way to frighten those that frighten his people from doing their duty. And those that will not hear of their faults from God's prophets, that are reprovers in the gate, shall be made to hear of them from conscience, which is a reprovcr in their own bosoms, that will not be daunted or silenced. And miserable is the man that is thus made a terror to himself! Yet this is not all; some are very much a terror to themselves, but they conceal it, and seem to others to be pleasant; but, "*I will make thee a terror to all thy friends*; thou shalt, upon all occasions, express thyself with so much horror and amazement, that all thy friends shall be afraid of conversing with thee, and shall choose to stand aloof from thy torment." Persons in deep melancholy and distraction are a terror to themselves and all about them; which is a good reason why we should be very thankful, so long as God continues to us the use of our reason and the peace of our consciences. (2.) His friends, whom he put a confidence in, and perhaps, studied to oblige, in what he did against Jeremiah, shall all fail him. God does not presently strike him dead for what he did against Jeremiah, but lets him live miserably, like Cain in the *land of shaking*; in such a continual consternation, that, wherever he goes, he shall be a monument of divine justice; and when it is asked, "*What makes this man in such continual terror?*" it shall be answered, "*It is God's hand upon him for putting Jeremiah in the stocks*." His friends, who should encourage him, shall all be cut off; they shall *fall by the sword of the enemy*, and *his eyes shall behold it*; which dreadful sight shall increase his terror. (3.) He shall find, in the issue, that his terror is not causeless, but that divine vengeance is waiting for him; (v. 6.) he and his family shall *go into captivity*, even to *Babylon*; he shall neither die before the evil comes, as Josiah, nor live to survive it, as some did, but he shall die a captive, and shall in effect, be buried in his chains, *he and all his friends*. Thus far is the doom of Pashur.—Let persecutors read it, and tremble; tremble to repentance before they be made to tremble to their ruin.

2. Did he aim to keep the people easy, to prevent the destruction that Jeremiah prophesied of, and by sinking his reputation to make his words fall to the ground? It is probable that he did; for it appears by v. 6. that he did himself set up for a prophet, and told the people that they should have peace; he *prophesied lies to them*, and because Jeremiah's prophecy contradicted his, and tended to awaken those whom he endeavoured to rock asleep in their sins, therefore he set himself against him. But could he gain his point? No, Jeremiah stands to what he has said against Judah and Jerusalem; and God by his mouth repeats it. Men get nothing by silencing those who reprove and warn them, for the word will have its course; so it had here.

(1.) The country shall be ruined: (v. 4.) *I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon*. It had long been God's own land, but he will now transfer his title to it to Nebuchadnezzar, he shall be master of the country, and dispose of the inhabitants; some to the sword, and some to captivity, as he pleases, but none shall escape him.

(2.) The city shall be ruined too, v. 5. The king of Babylon shall spoil that, and carry all that is valuable in it to Babylon. [1.] He shall seize their magazines and military stores, *these called the*

strength of the city,) and turn those against them. Take they trusted to as their strength; but what stead could they stand them in, when they had thrown themselves out of God's protection, and when he who was indeed their Strength, was departed from them? [2.] He shall carry off all their stock in trade, their wares and merchandises, here called *their labours*, because it was what they laboured about, and got by their labour. [3.] He shall plunder their fine houses, and take away their rich furniture, here called their *precious things*, because they valued them, and set their hearts so much upon them. Happy they who have secured to themselves precious things in God's precious promises, which are out of the reach of soldiers. [4.] He shall rifle the exchequer, and take away the jewels of the crown and *all the treasures of the kings of Judah*. This was that instance of the calamity which was first of all threatened to Hezekiah long ago, as his punishment for showing his treasures to the king of Babylon's ambassadors, Isa. xxxix. 6. The treasury, they thought, was their defence; but that betrayed them, and became an easy prey to the enemy.

7. O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. 8. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily. 9. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name: but *his word* was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. 10. For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, *say they*, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, *saying*, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him. 11. But the LORD is with me as a mighty terrible one; therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail; they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: *their* everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten. 12. But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I opened my cause. 13. Sing unto the LORD, praise ye the LORD; for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evil-doers.

Pashur's doom was, to be a *terror to himself*; Jeremiah, even now, in this hour of temptation, is far from being so; and yet it cannot be denied but that he is here, through the infirmity of the flesh, strangely agitated within himself; good men are but men at the best; God is not extreme to mark what they say and do amiss, and therefore we must not be so, but make the best of it. In these verses, it appears that, upon occasion of the great indignation and injury that Pashur did to Jeremiah, there was a struggle in his breast between his graces and his corruptions. His discourse with himself, and with his God, upon this occasion, was somewhat perplexed; let us try to methodise it.

1. Here is a sad representation of the wrong that was done him, and the affronts that were put upon him; and this representation, no doubt, was according to truth, and deserves no blame, but was very justly and very fitly made to him that sent him, and, no doubt, would bear him out. He complains, 1. That he was ridiculed and laughed at; they made a jest of every thing he said and did; and this cannot but be a great grievance to an ingenuous mind; (v. 7, 8.) *I am in derision, I am mocked*. They played upon him, and made themselves and one another merry with him, as if he had been a fool, good for nothing but to make sport. Thus he was continually; *I was in derision daily*: thus he was universally; *Every one mocks me*; the greatest so far forget *their own* gravity, and the meanest so far forget *mine*. Thus our Lord Jesus, on the cross, was reviled both by priests and people; and the revilings of each had their peculiar aggravation. And what was it that thus exposed him to contempt and scorn? It was nothing but his faithful and zealous discharge of his office; (v. 8.) they could find nothing for which to deride him, but his preaching; it was *the word of the Lord* that *was made a reproach*: that for which they should have honoured and respected him—that he was instructed to deliver *the word of the Lord* to them, was the very thing for which they reproached and reviled him. He never preached a sermon, but, though he kept as closely as possible to his instructions, they found something or other in it, for which to banter and abuse him. Note, It is sad to think that, though divine revelation be one of the greatest blessings and honours that ever was bestowed upon the world, yet it has been turned very much to the reproach of the most zealous preachers and believers of it. Two things they derided him for, (1.) The manner of his preaching: *Since he spake, he cried out*. He had always been a lively, affectionate preacher, and since he began to speak in God's name, he always spake as a man in earnest; he *cried aloud, and did not spare*, spared neither himself, nor them to whom he preached; and this was enough for them to laugh at, who hated to be serious. It is common for those that are unaffected with, and disaffected to, the things of God themselves, to ridicule those that are much affected with them. Lively preachers are the scorn of careless, unbelieving hearers. (2.) The matter of his preaching; he *cried violence and spoil*. He reproved them for the *violence and spoil* which they were guilty of toward one another; and he prophesied of the violence and spoil which should be brought upon them, as the punishment of that sin; for the former they ridiculed him as over-precise, for the latter as over-credulous; in both he was provoking to them, and therefore they resolved to run him down. This was bad enough, yet he complains further, 2. That he was plotted against, and his ruin contrived; he was not only ridiculed as a weak man, but reproached and misrepresented as a bad man, and dangerous to the government. Thus he laments as his grievance, v. 10. Being *laughed at*, though it touches a man in point of honour, is yet a thing that may be easily *laughed at* again; for, as it has been well observed, it is no shame to be laughed at, but to deserve to be so. But there were those that acted a more spiteful part, and with more subtilty. (1.) They spake ill of him behind his back, when he had no opportunity of clearing himself, and were industrious to spread false report concerning him; *I heard*, at second-hand, *the defaming of many, fear on every side, (of many Magor missabib; so some read it,) of many such men as Pashur was, and who may therefore expect his doom*. Or, this was the matter of their defamation, they represented Jeremiah as a man that instilled fears and jealousies on every side into the minds of

the people, and so made them uneasy under the government, and disposed them to a rebellion. Or, he perceived them so malicious against him, that he could not but be afraid on every side; wherever he was, he had reason to fear informers; so that they made him almost a *Magor-missabib*. These words are found in the original, *verbatim*, the same, Ps. xxxi. 13. *I have heard the slander, or defaming of many, fear on every side.* Jeremiah, in his complaint, chooses to make use of the same words that David had made use of before him, that it might be a comfort to him to think that other good men had suffered the abuses before him, and to teach us to make use of David's psalms with application to ourselves, as there is occasion. Whatever we have to say, we may from thence take with us words. See how Jeremiah's enemies contrived the matter; *Report, say they, and we will report it.* They resolve to cast an odium upon him, and this is the method they take; "Let some very bad thing be said of him, which may render him obnoxious to the government, and though it be ever so false, we will second it, and spread it, and add to it." (For the reproaches of good men lose nothing by the carriage.) "Do you that frame a story plausibly, or you that can pretend to some acquaintance with him, report it once, and we will report it from you, in all companies that we come into. Do you say it, and we will swear it; do you set it ageing, and we will follow it." And thus both are equally guilty, they that raise, and they that propagate, the false report. *The receiver is as bad as the thief.* (2.) They flattered him to his face, that they might get something from him, on which to ground an accusation, as the spies that came to Christ, feigning themselves to be just men, Luke xx. 20.—xi. 53, 54. His familiars, that he conversed freely with, and put a confidence in, watched for his halting, observed what he said, which they could by any strained *innuendo* put a bad construction upon, and carried it to his enemies. His case was very sad, when those betrayed him whom he took to be his friends. They said among themselves, "If we accost him kindly, and insinuate ourselves into his acquaintance, peradventure he will be enticed to own that he is in confederacy with the enemy, and a pensioner to the king of Babylon, or we shall wheedle him to speak some treasonable words; and then we shall prevail against him, and take our revenge on him for telling us of our faults, and threatening us with the judgments of God." Note, Neither the innocence of the dove, no, nor the prudence of the serpent to help it, can secure men from unjust censure and false accusation.

II. Here is an account of the temptation he was in, under this affliction; his feet were almost gone, as the Psalmist's, Ps. xxxi. 2. And this is that which is to be most dreaded in affliction, being driven to it by sin, Neh. vi. 13.

1. He was tempted to quarrel with God for making him a prophet. This he begins with; (v. 7.) *O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived.* This, as we read it, sounds very harsh. God's servants have been always ready to own that he is a faithful Master, and never cheated them; and therefore this is the language of Jeremiah's folly and corruption. If, when God called him to be a prophet, and told him he would set him over the kingdoms, (ch. i. 10.) and make him a defended city, he flattered himself with an expectation of having universal respect paid him as a messenger from heaven, and living safe and easy, and afterward it proved otherwise, he must not say that God had deceived him, but that he had deceived himself; for he knew how the prophets before him had been persecuted, and had no reason to expect better treatment. Nay, God had expressly told him that all the princes, priests, and people of the land, would fight against

him, (ch. i. 19.) which he had forgotten, else he would not have laid the blame on God thus. Christ thus told his disciples what opposition they should meet with, *that they might not be offended*, John xvi. 1, 2. But the words may very well be read thus, *Thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded*; it is the same word that was used, Gen. ix. 27. margin, *God shall persuade Japhet.* And Prov. xxv. 15. *By much forbearance is a prince persuaded.* And Hos. ii. 14. *I will allure her.* And this agrees best with what follows; "Thou wast stronger than I, didst over-persuade me with argument; nay, didst overpower me by the influence of thy Spirit upon me, and thou hast prevailed." Jeremiah was very backward to undertake the prophetic office, he pleaded that he was under age, and unfit for the service; but God overruled his pleas, and told him that he must go, ch. i. 6, 7. "Now, Lord," says he, "since thou hast put this office upon me, why dost thou not stand by me in it? Had I thrust myself upon it, I might justly have been in derision; but why am I so when thou didst thrust me into it. It was Jeremiah's infirmity to complain thus of God, as putting a hardship upon him in calling him to be a prophet, which he would not have done, had he considered the lasting honour thereby done him, sufficient to balance the present contempt he was under. Note, As long as we see ourselves in the way of God and duty, it is weakness and folly, when we meet with difficulties and discouragements in it, to wish we had never set out in it.

2. He was tempted to quit his work, and give it over; partly because he himself met with so much hardship in it, and partly because those to whom he was sent, instead of being edified and made better, were exasperated and made worse; (v. 9.) "Then I said, Since by prophesying in the name of the Lord I gain nothing to him or myself but dishonour and disgrace, I will not make mention of him as my Author for any thing I say, nor speak any more in his name; since my enemies do all they can to silence me, I will even silence myself, and speak no more, since I may as well speak to the stones as to them." Note, It is strong temptation to poor ministers to resolve that they will preach no more, when they see their preaching slighted and wholly ineffectual. But let people dread putting their ministers into this temptation. Let not their labour be in vain with us, lest we provoke them to say that they will take no more pains with us, and provoke God to say, They shall take no more. Yet let not ministers hearken to this temptation, but go on in their duty, notwithstanding their discouragements, for this is the more thank-worthy; and though *Israel be not gathered*, yet they shall be glorious.

III. Here is an account of his faithful adherence to his work, and cheerful dependence on his God, notwithstanding.

1. He found the grace of God mighty in him to keep him to his business, notwithstanding the temptation he was in to throw it up; "I said, in my haste, I will speak no more in his name, what I have in my heart to deliver I will stifle and suppress; but I soon found it was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, which glowed inwardly, and must have vent, it was impossible to smother it; I was like a man in a burning fever, uneasy, and in a continual agitation; while I kept silence from good, my heart was hot within me, it was pain and grief to me, and I must speak, that I may be refreshed;" Ps. xxxix. 2, 3. Job xxxii. 20. While I kept silence, my bones waxed old, Ps. xxxii. 3. See the power of the spirit of prophecy in those that were actuated by it, and thus will a holy zeal for God even eat men up, and make them forget themselves. I believed, therefore have I spoken. Jeremiah was soon weary

with forbearing to preach, and could not contain himself; nothing puts faithful ministers to pain so much as being silenced, nor to terror so much as silencing themselves. Their convictions will soon triumph over temptations of that kind; for, *Who is unto me if I preach not the gospel*, whatever it cost me, 1 Cor. ix. 16. And it is really a mercy to have the word of God thus mighty in us to overpower our corruptions.

2. He was assured of God's presence with him, which would be sufficient to baffle all the attempts of his enemies against him; (v. 11.) "They say, *We shall prevail against him*, the day will undoubtedly be our own; but I am sure that *they shall not prevail, they shall not prosper*, I can safely set them all at defiance, for *the Lord is with me*, is on my side, to take my part against them, (Rom. viii. 31.) to protect me from all their malicious designs upon me. He is with me, to support me and bear me up under the burthen which now presses me down. He is with me, to make the word I preach answer the end he designs, though not the end I desire. He is with me as a mighty terrible one, to strike a terror upon them, and so to overcome them." Note, Even that in God which is terrible, is really comfortable to his servants that trust in him, for it shall be turned against those that seek to terrify his people. God's being a mighty God, bespeaks him a terrible God to all those that take up arms against him, or any one that, like Jeremiah, was commissioned by him. How terrible will the wrath of God be to those that think to daunt all about them, and will themselves be daunted by nothing! The most formidable enemies that act against us, appear despicable when we see the Lord for us as a *mighty terrible one*, Neh. iv. 14. Jeremiah speaks now with a good assurance, "If the Lord be with me, my persecutors shall stumble, so that when they pursue me, they shall not overtake me, (Ps. xxvii. 2.) and then they shall be greatly ashamed of their impotent malice and fruitless attempts. Nay, their everlasting confusion and infamy shall never be forgotten; they shall not forget it themselves, but it shall be to them a constant and lasting vexation, whenever they think of it; others shall not forget it, but it shall leave upon them an indelible reproach."

3. He appeals to God against them as a righteous Judge, and prays judgment upon his cause, v. 12. He looks upon God as the God that *tries the righteous*, takes cognizance of them, and of every cause that they are interested in. He does not judge in favour of them, with partiality, but *tries them*, and, finding that they have right on their side, and their persecutors wrong them and are injurious to them, he gives sentence for them. He that tries the righteous, tries the unrighteous too, and he is very well qualified to do both. For he *sees the reins and the heart*, he certainly knows men's thoughts and affections, their aims and intentions, and therefore can pass an unerring judgment on their words and actions. Now this is the God, (1.) To whom the prophet here refers himself, and in whose court he lodges his appeal; *Unto thee have I opened my cause*. Not but that God perfectly knew his cause, and all the merits of it, without his openings; but the cause we commit to God we must spread before him, he knows it, but he will know it from us, and allows us to be particular in the opening of it, not to affect him, but to affect ourselves. Note, It will be an ease to our spirits, when we are oppressed and burthened, to *open our cause* to God, and pour out our complaints before him. (2.) By whom he expects to be righted; "Let me see thy vengeance upon them; such vengeance as thou thinkest fit to take for their conviction and my vindication, the vengeance thou ushest to take on prosecutors." Note, Whatever injuries are done us, we must not

study to avenge ourselves, but must leave it to that God to do it, to whom *vengeance belongs*, and who hath said, *I will repay*.

4. He greatly rejoices and praises God, in a full confidence that God would appear for his deliverance, v. 13. So full is he of the comfort of God's presence with him, the divine protection he is under, and the divine promise he has to depend upon, that in a transport of joy he stirs up himself and others to give God the glory of it; *Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord*. Here appears a great change with him since he began this discourse; the clouds are blown over, his complaints all silenced, and turned into thanksgivings. He has now an entire confidence in that God whom (v. 7.) he was distrusting; he stirs up himself to praise that Name which (v. 9.) he was resolving no more to make mention of. It was the lively exercise of faith, that made this happy change, that turned his sighs into songs, and his tremblings into triumphs. It is proper to express our hope in God by our praising him, and our praising God by our singing to him. That which is the matter of the praise is, *He hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of the evil-doers*; he means especially himself, his own poor soul. "He hath delivered me formerly when I was in distress, and now of late out of the hand of Pashur, and he will continue to deliver me, 2 Cor. i. 10. He will deliver my soul from the sin that I am in danger of falling into, when I am thus persecuted. He hath delivered me from the hand of evil-doers, so that they have not gained their point, nor had their will." Note, Those that are faithful in well-doing need not fear those that are spiteful in evil-doing, for they have a God to trust to, who has well-doers under the hand of his protection, and evil-doers under the hand of his restraint.

14. Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. 15. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man-child is born unto thee; making him very glad. 16. And let that man be as the cities which the Lord overthrew, and repented not; and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noon-tide; 17. Because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb to be always great with me. 18. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?

What is the meaning of this? Does there proceed out of the same mouth blessing and cursing? Could he that said so cheerfully, (v. 13.) *Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord*, say so passionately, (v. 14.) *Cursed be the day wherein I was born*? How shall we reconcile these? What we have in these verses the prophet records, I suppose, to his own shame, as he had recorded that in the foregoing verses, to God's glory. It seems to be a relation of the ferment he had been in, while he was in the stocks, out of which by faith and hope he had recovered himself, rather than a new temptation which he afterwards fell into, and it should come in like that of David, (Ps. xxxi. 22.) *I said in my haste, I am cut off*. This is also implied, Ps. lxxvii. 7. When grace has got the victory, it is good to remember the struggles of corruption, that we may

be ashamed of ourselves and our own folly, may admire the goodness of God in not taking us at our word, and may be warned by it to double our guard upon our spirits, another time. See here how strong the temptation was, which the prophet, by divine assistance, got the victory over, and how far he yielded to it, that we may not despair, if we through the weakness of the flesh be at any time thus tempted. Let us see here,

1. What the prophet's language was, in this temptation.

(1.) He fastened a brand of infamy upon his birth-day, as Job did in a heat; (*ch. iii. 1.*) "*Cursed be the day wherein I was born.*" It was an ill day to me, (*v. 14.*) because it was the beginning of sorrows, and an inlet to all this misery." It is a wish that he had *never been born*. Judas in hell had reason to wish so; (*Matth. xxvi. 24.*) but no man on earth has reason to wish so, because he knows not but that he may yet become a vessel of mercy, much less has any good man reason to wish so. Whereas some keep their birth-day, at the return of the year, with gladness, he will look upon his birth-day as a melancholy day, and will solemnize it with sorrows, and will have it looked upon as an ominous day.

(2.) He wished ill to the messenger that brought his father the news of his birth, *v. 15.* It made his father very glad to hear that he had a child born, (perhaps it was his first-born,) especially that it was a *man-child*, for then being of the family of the priests, he might live to have the honour of serving God's altar; and yet he is ready to curse the man that brought him the tidings, when perhaps the father to whom they were brought, gave him a gratuity for it. Here Mr. Gataker well observes, "That parents are often much rejoiced at the birth of their children, when, if they did foresee what misery they are born to, they would rather lament over them than rejoice in them." He is very free and very fierce in the curses he pronounces upon the messenger of his birth; (*v. 16.*) "*Let him be as the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which the Lord utterly overthrew, and repented not,* did not in the least mitigate or alleviate their misery. *Let him hear the cry of the invading, besieging enemy in the morning,* as soon as he is stirring, then let him take the alarm, and by noon let him hear their shouting for victory. And thus let him live in constant terror."

(2.) He is angry that the fate of the Hebrews' children in Egypt was not his, that he was not *slain from the womb*, that his first breath was not his last, and that he was not strangled as soon as he came into the world, *v. 17.* He wishes the messenger of his birth had been better employed, and had been his murderer; nay, that his mother of whom he was born, had been, to her great misery, always *with child of him*, and so, the womb in which he was conceived, would have served, without more ado, as a grave for him to be buried in. Job intimates a near alliance and resemblance between the womb and the grave; (*Job i. 21.*) *Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither.*

(4.) He thinks his present calamities sufficient to justify these passionate wishes; (*v. 18.*) "*Wherefore came I forth out of the womb,* where I lay hid, was not seen, was not hated, where I lay safe, and knew no evil, to see all this *labour and sorrow*, nay to have my *days consumed with shame*, to be continually vexed and abused, to have my life not only spent in trouble, but wasted and worn away by trouble?"

2. What use we may make of this. It is not recorded for our imitation, and yet we may learn good lessons from it.

(1.) See the vanity of human life, and the vexation of spirit that attends it. If there were not another life after this, we should be tempted many a time to wish that we had never known this, for our few days here are full of trouble.

(2.) See the folly and absurdity of sinful passion, how unreasonably it talks when it is suffered to ramble. What nonsense is it to curse a day—to curse a messenger for the sake of his message! What a brutish, barbarous thing for a child to wish his own mother had never been delivered of him! See *Isa. xlv. 10.* We can easily see the folly of it in others, and should take warning thence to suppress all such intemperate heats and passions in ourselves, to stifle them at first, and not to suffer these evil spirits to speak. When the heart is hot, let the tongue be bridled, *Ps. xxxix. 1, 2.*

(3.) See the weakness even of good men, who are but men at the best. See how much those who think they stand, are concerned to take heed lest they fall, and to pray daily, Father in heaven, *lead us not into temptation!*

CHAP. XXI.

It is plain that the prophecies of this book are not placed here in the same order in which they were preached; for there are chapters after this, which concern Jehoahaz, Jehoakim, and Jeconiah, who all reigned before Zedekiah, in whose reign the prophecy of this chapter bears date. Here is, 1. The message which Zedekiah sent to the prophet, to desire him to inquire of the Lord for them, *v. 1, 2.* 2. The answer which Jeremiah, in God's name, sent to that message; in which, 1. He foretells the certain and inevitable ruin of the city, and the fruitlessness of their attempts for its preservation, *v. 3. . 7.* 2. He advises the people to make the best of bad, by going over to the king of Babylon, *v. 8. . 10.* 3. He advises the king and his family to repent and reform, (*v. 11, 12.*) and not to trust to the strength of their city, and grow secure, *v. 13, 14.*

1. **T**HE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when king Zedekiah sent unto him Pashur the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maa-seiah the priest, saying, 2. Inquire, I pray thee, of the LORD for us; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us; if so be that the LORD will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us. 3. Then said Jeremiah unto them, Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah, 4. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that *are* in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and *against* the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this city. 5. And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand, and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath. 6. And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast: they shall die of a great pestilence. 7. And afterward, saith the LORD, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as *are* left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of

Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life: and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy.

Here is,

I. A very humble, decent message which king Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah the prophet, when he was in distress. It is indeed charged upon this Zedekiah, that he *humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord*; (2 Chron. xxxvi. 12.) he did not always humble himself as he did sometimes; he never humbled himself till necessity forced him to it; he humbled himself so far as to desire the prophet's assistance, but not so far as to take his advice, or to be ruled by him. Observe,

1. The distress which king Zedekiah was now in; *Nebuchadnezzar made war upon him*, not only invaded the land, but besieged the city, and now actually invested it. Note, Those that put the evil day far from them, will be the more terrified when it comes upon them: and they who before slighted God's ministers, may then perhaps be glad to court an acquaintance with them.

2. The messengers he sent, *Pashur and Zephaniah*, one belonging to the 5th course of the priests, the other to the 24th. 1 Chron. xxiv. 9, 18. It was well that he sent, that he sent persons of rank; it had been better if he had desired a personal conference with the prophet, which, no doubt, he might easily have had if he would so far have *humbled himself*. Perhaps these priests were no better than the rest, and yet, when they were commanded by the king, they must carry a respectful message to the prophet, which was both a mortification to them and an honour to Jeremiah. He had rashly said, (ch. xx. 18.) *My days are consumed with shame*; and yet here we find that he lived to see better days than those were, when he made that complaint; now he appears in reputation. Note, It is folly to say, when things are bad with us, "They will always be so." It is possible that those who are despised, may come to be respected; and it is promised, that those who *honour God, he will honour*, and that those who *have afflicted his people, shall bow to them*, Isa. lx. 14.

3. The message itself, *Inquire, I pray thee, of the Lord for us*, v. 2. Now that the Chaldean army was got into their borders, into their bowels, they were at length convinced that Jeremiah was a true prophet, though loath to own it, and brought too late to it. Under this conviction, they desire him to stand their friend with God, believing him to have that interest in heaven, which none of their other prophets had, who had flattered them with hopes of peace. They now employ Jeremiah, (1.) To consult the mind of God for them; "*Inquire of the Lord for us*"; ask him what course we shall take in our present strait, for the measures we have hitherto taken are all broken." Note, Those that will not take the direction of God's grace, how to get clear of their sins, would yet be glad of the directions of his providence, how to get clear of their troubles. (2.) To seek the favour of God for them: so some read it; "*Entreat the Lord for us*"; be an intercessor for us with God." Note, Those that slight the prayers of God's people and ministers when they are in prosperity, may perhaps be glad of an interest in them when they come to be in distress. *Give us of your oil*. The benefit they promise themselves, is, *It may be, the Lord will deal with us now according to the wondrous works he wrought for our fathers*, that the enemy may raise the siege, and *go up from us*. Observe, [1.] All their care is, to get

rid of their trouble: not to make their peace with God, and be reconciled to him: "That our enemy may *go up from us*;" not, "That our God may return to us." Thus Pharaoh, (Exod. x. 17.) *Entreat the Lord that he may take away this death*. [2.] All their hope is, that God had done *wondrous works* formerly in the deliverance of Jerusalem when Sennacherib besieged it, at the prayer of Isaiah: so we are told, 2 Chron. xxxii. 20, 21. And who can tell but he may destroy these besiegers, (as he did those,) at the prayer of Jeremiah? But they did not consider how different the character of Zedekiah and his people was from that of Hezekiah and his people: those were days of general reformation and piety, these of general corruption and apostasy. Jerusalem is now the reverse of what it was then. Note, It is folly to think that God should do for us while we hold fast our iniquity, as he did for those that held fast their integrity.

II. A very startling, cutting reply, which God, by the prophet, sent to that message. If Jeremiah had been to have answered the message of himself, we have reason to think that he would have returned a comfortable answer, in hope their sending of such a message was an indication of some good purposes in them, which he would be glad to make the best of, for he did not desire the woful day. But God knows their hearts better than Jeremiah does, and sends them an answer which hath scarcely one word of comfort in it. He sends it them in the name of the *Lord God of Israel*, (v. 3.) to intimate to them, that though God allowed himself to be called the *God of Israel*, and had done great things for Israel formerly, and had still great things in store for Israel, pursuant to his covenants with them, yet this should stand the present generation in no stead, who were Israelites in name only, and not in deed, any more than God's dealings with them should cut off his relation to Israel as their God. It is here foretold,

1. That God will render all their endeavours for their own security fruitless and ineffectual; (v. 4.) "I will be so far from teaching your hands to war, and putting an edge upon your swords, that I will *turn back the weapons of war that are in your hand*, when you sally out upon the besiegers to beat them off, so that they shall not give the stroke you design; nay, they shall recoil into your own faces, and be turned upon yourselves." Nothing can make for those who have God against them.

2. That the besiegers shall in a little time make themselves masters of Jerusalem, and of all its wealth and strength; *I will assemble them in the midst of this city*, who are now surrounding it. Note, If that place, which should have been a centre of devotion, be made a centre of wickedness, it is not strange if God make it a rendezvous of destroyers.

3. That God himself will be their Enemy; and then I know not who can befriend them, no, not Jeremiah himself; (v. 5.) "I will be so far from protecting you, as I have done formerly in a like case, that *I myself will fight against you*." Note, Those who rebel against God may justly expect that he will make war upon them; and that. (1.) With the power of a God who is irresistibly victorious; *I will fight against you with an outstretched hand*, which will reach far, and *with a strong arm*, which will strike home, and wound deep. (2.) With the displeasure of a God, who is indisputably righteous. It is a correction in love, but an execution in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath; it is upon a sentence sworn in wrath, against which there will lie no exception; and it will soon be found what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God.

4. That those who, for their own safety, decline sallying out upon the besiegers, and so avoid their sword, shall yet not escape the sword of God's justice; (v. 6.) *I will smite those that abide in the city*,

(so it may be read,) *both man and beast*; both the beasts that are for food, and those that are for service in war, foot and horse; *they shall die of a great pestilence*, which shall rage within the walls, while the enemies are encamped about them. Though Jerusalem's gates and walls may for a time keep out the Chaldeans, they cannot keep out God's judgments. His arrows of pestilence can reach those that think themselves safe from other arrows.

5. That the king himself, and all the people that escape the *sword, famine, and pestilence*, shall fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, who shall cut them off in cold blood; (v. 7.) *They shall not spare them, nor have pity on them.* Let not them expect to find mercy with men, who have forfeited God's compassions, and shut themselves out from his mercy. Thus was the decree gone forth; and then to what purpose was it for Jeremiah to *inquire of the Lord for them?*

8. And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.

9. He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey.

10. For I have set my face against this city, for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD; it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

11. And touching the house of the king of Judah, say, Hear ye the word of the LORD: 12. O house of David, thus saith the LORD, Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

13. Behold, I am against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, and rock of the plain, saith the LORD; which say, Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations? 14. But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the LORD: and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about it.

By the civil message which the king sent to Jeremiah, it appeared that both he and the people began to have a respect for him, which it had been Jeremiah's policy to make some advantage of for himself; but the reply which God obliges him to make, is enough to crush the little respect they begin to have for him, and to exasperate them against him more than ever. Not only the predictions in the foregoing verses, but the prescriptions in these, were provoking; for here,

1. He advises the people to surrender and desert to the Chaldeans, as the only means left them to save their lives, v. 8.—10. This counsel was very displeasing to those who were flattered by their false prophets into a desperate resolution to hold out to the last extremity, trusting to the strength of their walls and courage of their soldiery, to keep out the enemy, or to their foreign aids to raise the siege. The prophet assures them, "*The city shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall not only plunder it, but burn it with fire, for God*

himself hath set his face against this city for evil, and not for good, to lay it waste, and not to protect it, for evil which shall have no good mixed with it, no mitigation or merciful alloy; and therefore if you would make the best of bad, you must beg quarter of the Chaldeans, and surrender prisoners of war." In vain did Rabshakeh persuade the Jews to do this while they had God for them, (Isa. xxxvi. 16.) but it was the best course they could take now that God was against them. Both the law and the prophets had often set before them life and death in another sense—life, if they obey the voice of God, death, if they persist in disobedience, Deut. xxx. 19. But they had slighted that life which would have made them truly happy, to upbraid them with which the prophet here uses the same expression; (v. 8.) *Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death*, which denotes not, as that, a fair proposal, but a melancholy dilemma, advising them of two evils to choose the least; and that lesser evil, a shameful and wretched captivity, is all the life now left for them to propose to themselves. *He that abides in the city*, and trusts to that to secure them, shall certainly die either by the sword without the walls, or *famine or pestilence* within. But he that can so far bring down his spirit, and quit his vain hopes, as to go out, and fall to the Chaldeans, *his life shall be given him for a prey*; he shall save his life, but with much difficulty and hazard, as a prey is taken from the mighty. It is an expression like that, *He shall be saved, yet so as by fire.* He shall escape, but very narrowly; or, he shall have such surprising joy and satisfaction in escaping with his life from such a universal destruction, as shall equal theirs that divide the spoil. They thought to have made a prey of the camp of the Chaldeans, as their ancestors did that of the Assyrians, (Isa. xxxiii. 23.) but they will be sadly disappointed; if by yielding at discretion they can but save their lives, that is all the prey they must promise themselves. Now one would think this advice from a prophet, in God's name, should have gained some credit with them, and been universally followed; but, for aught that appears, there were few or none that took it; so wretchedly were their hearts hardened to their destruction.

2. He advises the king and princes to reform, and make conscience of the duty of their place. Because it was the king that sent the message to him, in the reply there shall be a particular word for *the house of the king*, not to compliment or court them, (that was no part of a prophet's business, no not when they did him the honour to send to him,) but to give them wholesome counsel; (v. 11, 12.) "*Execute judgment in the morning*; do it carefully and diligently. Those magistrates that would fill up their place with duty, had need rise betimes. Do it quickly, and do not delay to do justice upon appeals made to you, and tire out poor petitioners as you have done. Do not lie in your beds in a morning, to sleep away the debauch of the night before, nor spend the morning in pampering the body, (as those princes, Eccl. x. 16.) but spend it in the despatch of business. You would be delivered out of the hand of those that distress you, and expect that therein God should do you justice; see then that you do justice to those that apply themselves to you, and *deliver them out of the hand of their oppressors, lest my fury go out like fire* against you in a particular manner, and you fare worst, who think to escape best, *because of the evil of your doings.*" Now, (1.) This intimates that it was their neglect to do their duty, that brought all this desolation upon the people. It was the *evil of their doings*, that kindled the fire of God's wrath. Thus plainly does he deal even with the *house of the king*; for those that would have the benefit of a prophet's prayers, must thank-

fully take a prophet's reproofs. (2.) This directs them to take the right method for a national reformation. The princes must begin, and set a good example, and then the people will be invited to reform. They must use their power for the punishment of wrong, and then the people will be obliged to reform. He reminds them that they are *the House of David*, and therefore should tread in his steps, who executed judgment and justice to his people. (3.) This gives them some encouragement to hope that there may yet be a lengthening of their tranquillity, Dan. iv. 27. If any thing will recover their state from the brink of ruin, this will.

3. He shows them the vanity of all their hopes so long as they continued unreformed, v. 13, 14. Jerusalem is an *inhabitant of the valley*, guarded with mountains on all sides, which were their natural fortifications, making it difficult for an army to approach them. It is a *rock of the plain*, which made it difficult for an army to undermine them. These advantages of their situation they trusted to more than to the power and promise of God; and thinking their city by these means to be impregnable, they set the judgments of God at defiance, saying, "*Who shall come down against us?*" None of our neighbours dare make a descent upon us; or, if they do, *who shall enter into our habitations?*" They had some colour for this confidence; for it appears to have been the sense of all their neighbours that no enemy could force his way into Jerusalem, Lam. iv. 12. But those are least safe, that are most secure. God soon shows the vanity of that challenge, *Who shall come down against us?* when he says, (v. 13.) *Behold, I am against thee.* They had indeed by their wickedness driven God out of their city, when he would have tarried with them as a Friend; but they could not by their bulwarks keep him out of their city, when he came against them as an Enemy. If God be for us, who can be against us? But if he be against us, who can be for us, to stand us in any stead? Nay, he comes against them not as an Enemy that may lawfully and with some hope of success be resisted, but as a Judge that cannot be resisted; for he says, (v. 14.) *I will punish you*, by due course of law, *according to the fruit of your doings*, according to the merit of them, and the direct tendency of them. That shall be brought upon you, which is the natural product of sin. Nay, he will not only come with the anger of an enemy, and the justice of a judge, but with the force of a consuming fire, which has no compassion, as a judge sometimes has, nor spares any thing combustible, that comes in its way. Jerusalem is become a forest, in which God will *kindle a fire* that shall consume all before it; for our God is himself *a consuming Fire*; and *who is able to stand in his sight*, when once he is angry.

CHAP. XXII.

Upon occasion of the message sent in the foregoing chapter to the house of the king, we have here recorded some sermons which Jeremiah preached at court, in some preceding reigns, that it might appear they had had fair warning long before that fatal sentence was pronounced upon them, and were put in a way to have prevented it. Here is, I. A message sent to the royal family, as it should seem, in the reign of Jehoiakim, relating partly to Jehoiabaz, who was carried away captive into Egypt, and partly to Jehoiakim, who succeeded him, and was now upon the throne. The king and princes are exhorted to execute judgment, and are assured that, if they do so, the royal family should flourish, but otherwise it should be ruined, v. 1. 9. Jehoiabaz, called here, *Shalum*, is lamented, v. 10. 12. Jehoiakim is reproved and threatened, v. 13. 19. II. Another message sent them in the reign of Jehoiachin, alias Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim. He is charged with an obstinate refusal to hear, and is threatened with destruction, and it is foretold, that in him Solomon's house should fail, v. 20. 30.

1. **THUS** saith the LORD, Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, 2. And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates; 3. Thus saith the LORD, Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. 4. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings, sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people. 5. But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation. 6. For thus saith the LORD unto the king's house of Judah, Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon: yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited. 7. And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons; and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast them into the fire. 8. And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this great city? 9. Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them.

Here we have,

I. Orders given to Jeremiah to preach before the king. In the chapter before, Zedekiah sent messengers to the prophet, but here the prophet is bidden to go, in his own proper person, *to the house of the king*, and demand his attention to the word of the King of kings; (v. 2.) *Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah.* Subjects must own, that where the word of a king is, there is power over them; but kings must own, that where the word of the Lord is, there is power over them. The king of Judah is here spoken to, *as sitting upon the throne of David*, who was a man after God's own heart, as holding their dignity and power by the covenant made with him; let them therefore conform to his example, that they may have the benefit of the promises made to him. With the king his servants are spoken to, because a good government depends upon a good ministry as well as a good king.

II. Instructions given him what to preach.

1. He must tell them what was their duty, what was the good which the Lord their God required of them, v. 3. They must take care, (1.) That they do all the good they can with the power they have. They must do justice, in defence of those that were injured, and must deliver the spoiled out of the hand of their oppressors. This was the duty of their place, Ps. lxxxii. 3. Herein they must be ministers of God for good. (2.) That they do no hurt with it, *no wrong, no violence.* That is the greatest wrong and violence, which is done under colour of law and justice, and by those whose business it is to punish and protect from wrong and violence.

They must *do no wrong to the stranger, fatherless, and widow*, for these God does in a particular manner patronize, and take under his tuition, Exod. xxii. 21, 22.

2. He must assure them that the faithful discharge of their duty would advance and secure their prosperity, v. 4. 'There shall then be a succession of kings, an uninterrupted succession, *upon the throne of David*, and of his line; these enjoying a perfect tranquillity, and living in great state and dignity, *riding on chariots, and horses*, as before, ch. xvii. 25. Note, The most effectual way to preserve the dignity of the government, is, to do the duty of it.

3. He must likewise assure them that the iniquity of their family, if they persisted in it, would be the ruin of their family, though it was a royal family; (v. 5.) *If ye will not hear*, will not obey, *this house shall become a desolation*, the palace of the kings of Judah shall fare no better than other habitations in Jerusalem. Sin has often been the ruin of royal palaces, though ever so stately, ever so strong. This sentence is ratified by an oath; *I swear by myself*, (and God can swear by no greater, Heb. vi. 13.) that this house shall be laid in ruins. Note, Sin will be the ruin of the houses of princes as well as of mean men.

4. He must show how fatal their wickedness would be to their kingdom as well as to themselves, to Jerusalem especially, the royal city, v. 6.—9. (1.) It is confessed that Judah and Jerusalem had been valuable in God's eyes, and considerable in their own; *Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon*. Their lot was cast in a place that was rich and pleasant as Gilead; Zion was a strong hold, as stately as Lebanon: this they trusted to as their security. But, (2.) This shall not protect them; the country that is now fruitful as Gilead, shall be made a wilderness. The cities that are now strong as Lebanon, shall be cities *not inhabited*; and when the country is laid waste, the cities must be dispeopled. See how easily God's judgments can ruin a nation, and how certainly sin will do it.

When this desolating work is to be done, [1.] There shall be those that shall do it effectually; (v. 7.) *"I will prepare destroyers against thee; I will sanctify them,"* (so the word is,) "I will appoint them to this service and use them in it." Note, When destruction is designed, destroyers are *prepared*, and perhaps are in the preparing, and things are working toward the designed destruction, and are getting ready for it, long before. And who can contend with the destroyers of God's preparing? They shall destroy cities as easily as men fell trees in a forest; *They shall cut down thy choice cedars*; and yet, when they are down, shall value them no more than thorns or briars; they shall *cast them into the fire*, for their choicest cedars are become rotten ones, and good for nothing else. [2.] There shall be those who shall be ready to justify God in the doing of it; (v. 8, 9.) persons of *many nations*, when they *pass by* the ruins of this city in their travels, will ask, *"Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this city?"* How came so strong a city to be overpowered? So rich a city to be impoverished? So populous a city to be depopulated? So holy a city to be profaned? And a city that had been so dear to God, to be abandoned by him? The reason is so obvious, that it shall be ready in every man's mouth. Ask them *that go by the way*, Job xxi. 29. Ask the next man you meet, and he will tell you it was because they changed their gods, which other nations never used to do. They forsook the covenant of Jehovah their own God, revolted from their allegiance to him, and from the duty which their covenant with him bound them to, and they *worshipped other gods, and served them*, in contempt of him; and

therefore he gave them up to this destruction. Note, God never casts any off until they first cast him off. "Go," says God to the prophet, "and preach this to the royal family."

10. Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him; *but weep sore for him that goeth away*: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country. 11. For thus saith the LORD touching Shallum the son of Josiah king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place, He shall not return thither any more: 12. But he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more. 13. Wo unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; 14. That saith, I will build me a wide house, and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and *it is* ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion! 15. Shalt thou reign because thou closest *thyself* in cedar? Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, *and then it was well with him*? 16. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then *it was well with him*: was not this to know me? saith the LORD. 17. But thine eyes and thy heart *are* not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence to do it. 18. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, They shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! 19. He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

Kings, though they are gods to us, are men to God, and shall *die like men*; so it appears in these verses, where we have a sentence of death past upon two kings who reigned successively in Jerusalem, two brothers, and both the ungracious sons of a very pious father.

1. Here is the doom of Shallum, who doubtless is the same with Jehoahaz, for he is that son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned in the *stead of Josiah his father*, (v. 11.) which Jehoahaz did by the act of the people who made him king, though he was not the eldest son, 2 Kings xxiii. 30. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 1. Among the sons of Josiah (1 Chron. iii. 15.) there is one Shallum mentioned, and not Jehoahaz. Perhaps the people preferred him before his elder brother, because they thought him a more active, daring young man, and fitter to rule; but God soon showed them the folly of their injustice, and that it could not prosper, for within three months the kings of Egypt came upon them, deposed him, and carried him away prisoner into Egypt, as God had threatened, Deut. xxviii. 68. It does not appear that any of the people were taken into captivity with him. We have the story, 2 Kings xxiii. 34. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 4. Now here,

1. The people are directed to lament him rather

than his father Josiah; "*Weep not for the dead, weep not any more for Josiah.*" Jeremiah had been himself a true mourner for him, and had stirred up the people to mourn for him; (2 Chron. xxxv. 25.) yet now he will have them go out of mourning for him, though it was but three months after his death, and to turn their tears into another channel, they must weep sore for Jehoahaz, who is gone into Egypt; not that there was any great loss of him to the public, as there was of his father, but that his case was much more deplorable. Josiah went to the grave in peace and honour, was prevented from seeing the evil to come in this world, and removed to see the good to come in the other world; and therefore, *Weep not for him*, but for his unhappy son, who is likely to live and die in disgrace and misery, a wretched captive. Note, Dying saints may be justly envied, while living sinners are justly pitied. And so dismal perhaps the prospect of the times may be, that tears even for a Josiah, even for a Jesus, must be restrained, that they may be reserved for *ourselves and for our children*, Luke xxiii. 28.

2. The reason given is, because he shall never return out of captivity, as he and his people expected, but shall die there. They were loath to believe this, therefore it is repeated here again and again, he shall *return no more*, v. 10. He shall never have the pleasure of seeing his *native country*, but shall have the continual grief of hearing of the desolations of it. He is gone *forth out of this place*, and shall *never return*, v. 11. *He shall die in the place whither they have led him captive*, v. 12. This came of his forsaking the good example of his father, and usurping the right of his elder brother. In Ezekiel's lamentation for the princes of Israel, this Jehoahaz is represented as a young lion, that soon learned to *catch the prey*, but was taken, and brought in chains to Egypt, and was long expected to return, but in vain. See Ezek. xix. 3.—5.

II. Here is the doom of Jehoiakim, who succeeded him. Whether he had any better right to the crown than Shallum, we know not; for though he was elder than his predecessor, there seems to be another son of Josiah, elder than he, called *Johanan*, 1 Chron. iii. 15. But this we know, he ruled no better, and fared no better at last. Here is,

1. His sins faithfully reprov'd. It is not fit for a private person to say to a king, *Thou art wicked*; but a prophet, who has a message from God, betrays his trust if he does not deliver it, be it ever so unpleasant, even to kings themselves. Jehoiakim is not here charged with idolatry, and, probably, he had not yet put Urijah the prophet to death, (as we find afterward he did, *ch. xxvi. 22, 23.*) for then he would have been told of it here; but the crimes for which he is here reprov'd, are, (1.) Pride, and affectation of pomp and splendour; as if the business of a king were to look great, and to do good were to be the least of his care. He must build him a stately palace, a *wide house*, and *large chambers*, v. 14. He must have *windows cut out* after the newest fashion, perhaps like ash-windows with us. The rooms must be *ceiled with cedar*, the richest sort of wood. His house must be as well roofed and wainscotted as the temple itself, or else it will not please him, 1 Kings vi. 15, 16. Nay, it must exceed that, for it must be painted with *minium*, or *vermilion*, which dyes red, or, as some read it, with *indigo*, which dyes blue. No doubt, it is lawful for princes and great men to build and beautify and furnish their houses, so as is agreeable to their dignity; but he that knows what is in man, knew that Jehoiakim did this in the pride of his heart, which makes *that* to be sinful, exceeding sinful, which is in itself lawful. Those therefore that are enlarging their houses, and making them more sumptuous, have need to look well to the

frame of their own spirits in the doing of it, and carefully to watch against all the workings of vanity. But that which was particularly amiss in Jehoiakim's case, was, that he did this when he could not but perceive, both by the word of God, and by his providence, that divine judgments were breaking in upon him. He reigned his three first years by the permission and allowance of the king of Egypt, and all the rest by the permission and allowance of the king of Babylon; and yet he that was no better than a viceroy, will covet to vie with the greatest monarch in building and furniture. Observe how peremptory he is in this resolution; "*I will build me a wide house; I am resolved I will, whoever advises me to the contrary.*" Note, It is the common folly of those that are sinking in their estates, to covet to make a fair show. Many have unhumbl'd hearts under humbling providences, and look most haughty then when God is bringing them down. This is striving with our Maker. (2.) Carnal security and confidence in his wealth, depending upon the continuance of his prosperity, as if his mountain now stood so strong, that it could never be moved. He thought he must reign without any disturbance or interruption, because he had *closed himself in cedar*, (v. 15.) as if that were too fine to be assaulted, and too strong to be broken through, and as if God himself could not, for pity, give up such a stately house as that to be burned. Thus when Christ spake of the destruction of the temple, his disciples came to him, to show him what a magnificent structure it was, Matth. xxiii. 38.—xxiv. 1. Note, Those wretchedly deceive themselves, who think their present prosperity is a lasting security, and dream of reigning, because they are *enclosed in cedar*. It is but in his own conceit, that the rich man's wealth is his strong city. (3.) Some think he is here charged with sacrilege, and robbing the house of God to beautify and adorn his own house. He *cuts him out my windows*; so it is in the margin; which some understand as if he had taken windows out of the temple to put into his own palace, and then *jaunted them* (as it follows) *with vermilion*, that it might not be discovered, but might look of a piece with his own building. Note, Those cheat themselves, and ruin themselves at last, who think to enrich themselves by robbing God and his house; and however they may disguise it, God discovers it. (4.) He is here charged with extortion and oppression, violence and injustice. He *built his house by unrighteousness*, with money unjustly got, and materials which were not honestly come by, and perhaps upon ground obtained as Ahab obtained Naboth's vineyard. And because he went beyond what he could afford, he defrauded his workmen of their wages, which is one of the sins that *cries in the ears of the Lord of hosts*, Jam. v. 4. God takes notice of the wrong done by the greatest of men to their poor servants and labourers, and will repay *them*, in justice, that will not in justice pay those whom they employ, but *use their neighbour's service without wages*. Observe, The greatest of men must look upon the meanest as their neighbours, and be just to them accordingly, and love them as themselves. Jehoiakim was oppressive, not only in his buildings, but in the administration of his government. He did not do justice, made no conscience of shedding innocent blood, when it was to serve the purposes of his ambition, avarice, and revenge. He was all for *oppression and violence*; not to threaten it only, but to do it; and when he was set upon any act of injustice, nothing should stop him, but he would go through with it. And that which was at the bottom of all, was, covetousness, that love of money, which is the *root of all evil*. *Thine eyes and thine heart are not but for covetousness*; they were for that, and nothing else. Observe,

In *covetousness* the heart walks after the eyes: it is therefore called *the lust of the eye*, 1 John ii. 16. Job xxxi. 7. It is *setting the eyes upon that which is not*, Prov. xxxiii. 5. The eyes and the heart are then for *covetousness*, when the aims and affections are wholly set upon the wealth of this world; and where they are so, the temptation is strong to murder, oppression, and all manner of violence and villany. (5.) That which aggravated all his sins, was, that he was the son of a good father, who had left him a good example, if he would but have followed it; (v. 15, 16.) *Did not thy father eat and drink?* When Jehoiakim enlarged and enliterated his house, it is probable that he spake scornfully of his father for contenting himself with such a mean and inconvenient dwelling, below the grandeur of a sovereign prince, and ridiculed him as one that had a dull fancy, a low spirit, that could not find in his heart to lay out his money, nor cared for what was fashionable; that should not serve him, that served his father: but God, by the prophet, tells him that his father, though he had not the spirit of building, was a man of an excellent spirit, a better man than he, and did better for himself and his family. Those children that despise their parents' old fashions, commonly come short of their real excellencies. Jeremiah tells him,

[1.] That he was directed to do his duty by his father's practice; *He did judgment and justice*; he never did wrong to any of his subjects, never oppressed them, or put any hardship upon them, but was careful to preserve all their just rights and properties. Nay, he not only did not abuse his power for the support of wrong, but he used it for the maintaining of right. *He judged the cause of the poor and needy*, was ready to hear the cause of the meanest of his subjects, and do them justice. Note, The care of magistrates must be, not to support their grandeur and take their ease, but to do good; not only not to oppress the poor themselves, but to defend those that are oppressed.

[2.] That he was encouraged to do his duty by his father's prosperity. *First*, God accepted him; *"Was not this to know me, saith the Lord? Did he not hereby make it to appear that he rightly knew his God, and worshipped him, and, consequently, was known and owned of him?"* Note, The right knowledge of God consists in doing our duty, particularly that which is the duty of our place and station in the world. *Secondly*, He himself had the comfort of it; *Did he not eat and drink soberly and cheerfully*, so as to fit himself for his business, *for strength, and not for drunkenness?* Eccl. x. 17. *He did eat, and drink, and do judgment*; he did not (as perhaps Jehoiakim and his princes did) *drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of the afflicted*, Prov. xxxi. 5. *He did eat and drink*; God blessed him with great plenty, and he had the comfortable enjoyment of it himself, and gave handsome entertainments to his friends, was very hospitable, and very charitable. It was Jehoiakim's pride, that he had built a fine house, but Josiah's true praise, that he kept a good house. Many times those have least in them of true generosity, that have the greatest affection for pomp and grandeur; for, to support the extravagant expense of that, hospitality, bounty to the poor, yea, and justice itself, will be pinched. It is better to live with Josiah in an old-fashioned house, and do good, than live with Jehoiakim in a stately house, and leave debts unpaid. Josiah did *justice and judgment*, and then it was *well with him*; (v. 15.) and it is repeated again, v. 16. He lived very comfortably, his own subjects, and all his neighbours, respected him; and, whatever he put his hand to, prospered. Note, While we do well, we may expect it will be well with us. This Jehoiakim knew,

that his father found the way of duty to be the way of comfort, and yet he would not tread in his steps.

Note, It should engage us to keep up religion in our day, that our godly parents kept it up in theirs, and recommended it to us from their own experience of the benefit of it. They told us that they had found the promises which godliness has, of *the life that now is made good to them*, and that religion and piety are friendly to outward prosperity. So that we are inexcusable, if we turn aside from that good way.

2. Here we have Jehoiakim's doom faithfully read, v. 18, 19. We may suppose that it was in the utmost peril of his own life, that Jeremiah here foretold the shameful death of Jehoiakim; but *Thus saith the Lord concerning him*, and therefore thus saith he; (1.) He shall die unlamented; he shall make himself so odious by his oppression and cruelty, that all about him shall be glad to part with him, and none shall do him the honour of dropping one tear for him; whereas his father, who *did judgment and justice*, was universally lamented; and it is promised to Zedekiah, that he should be lamented at his death, for he conducted himself better than Jehoiakim had done, ch. xxxiv. 5. His relations shall not *lament him*, no, not with the common expressions of grief used at the funeral of the meanest, where they cried, *Ah, my brother!* or, *Ah, sister!* His subjects shall not lament him, nor cry out, as they used to do at the graves of their princes, *Ah, lord!* or, *Ah, his glory!* It is sad for any to live so, that, when they die, none will be sorry to part with them. Nay, (2.) He shall lie unburied; this is worse than the former. Even those that have no tears to grace the funerals of the dead with, would willingly have them buried out of their sight; but Jehoiakim shall be *buried with the burial of an ass*, he shall have no burial at all, but his dead body shall be cast into a ditch, or upon a dunghill; it shall be *drawn, or dragged, ignominiously, and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem*. It is said, in the story of Jehoiakim, (2 Chron. xxxvi. 6.) that *Nebuchadnezzar bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon*, and (Ezek. xix. 9.) that he was *brought in chains to the king of Babylon*. But it is probable that he died a prisoner, before he was carried away to Babylon, as was intended; perhaps he died for grief, or, in the pride of his heart, hastened his own end, and, for that reason, was denied a decent burial, as self-murderers usually are with us. Josephus says that Nebuchadnezzar slew him at Jerusalem, and left his body thus exposed, somewhere at a great distance from the *gates of Jerusalem*. And it is said, (2 Kings xxiv. 6.) *He slept with his fathers*. When he built himself a stately house, no doubt he designed himself a stately sepulchre; but see how he was disappointed. Note, Those that are lifted up with great pride, are commonly reserved for some great disgrace in life or death.

20. Go up to Lebanon, and cry; and lift up thy voice in Bashan, and cry from the passages: for all thy lovers are destroyed. 21. I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear: this *hath been* thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice. 22. The wind shall eat up all thy pastures, and thy lovers shall go into captivity: surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness. 23. O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars, how gracious shalt thou be when paugs come upon thee,

the pain as of a woman in travail! 24. *As I live*, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence; 25. And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans. 26. And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die. 27. But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return. 28. *Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure?* wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? 29. O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD: 30. Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

This prophecy seems to have been calculated for the ungracious, inglorious reign of Jeconiah, or Jehoiakim, the son of Jehoiakim, who succeeded him in the government, reigned but three months, and was then carried captive to Babylon, where he lived many years, Jer. lii. 31. We have, in these verses, a prophecy,

I. Of the desolations of the kingdom, which were now hastening on apace, v. 20.—23. Jerusalem and Judah are here spoken to, or the Jewish state as a single person, and we have it here under a threefold character.

1. Very haughty in a day of peace and safety; (v. 21.) “*I spake unto thee in thy prosperity*; spake, by my servants the prophets, reproofs, admonitions, counsels, but thou saidst, *I will not hear*, I will not heed, *thou obeyedst not my voice*, and wast resolved that thou wouldst not, and hadst the front to tell me so.” It is common for those that live at ease, to live in contempt of the word of God; *Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked*. This is so much the worse, that they had it by kind; *This has been thy manner from thy youth*. They were called *transgressors from the womb*, Isa. xlviii. 8.

2. Very timorous upon the alarms of trouble; (v. 20.) “*When thou seest all thy lovers destroyed*, when thou findest thine idols unable to help thee, and thy foreign alliances failing thee, thou wilt then go up to Lebanon, and cry, as one undone, and giving up all for lost, cry with a bitter cry; thou wilt cry, *Help, help, or we are lost*; thou wilt lift up thy voice in fearful shrieks, upon *Lebanon and Bashan*, two high hills, in hope to be heard from thence by the advantage of the rising ground. Thou wilt cry from the passages, from the roads, where thou wilt ever and anon be in distress.” Thou wilt cry from *Abarim*; so some read it, as a proper name, a famous mountain in the border of Moab. “Thou wilt cry, as those that are in great consternation use to do, to all about thee; but in vain, for, (v. 22.) *the wind shall eat up all thy pastors, or rulers*, that should protect and lead thee, and provide for thy safety: they shall be blasted, and withered, and brought to nothing, as buds and blossoms are by a bleak or freezing wind; they shall be devoured sud-

dently, insensibly, and irresistibly, as fruits by the wind. *Thy lovers*, that thou dependest upon, and hast an affection for, shall go into captivity, and shall be so far from saving thee, that they shall not be able to save themselves.”

3. Very tame under the heavy and lasting pressures of trouble; “*When there appears no relief from any of thy confederates, and thy own priests are at a loss, then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness*, v. 22. Note, Many will never be ashamed of their sins till they are brought by them to the last extremity; and it is well if we get this good by our straits, by them to be brought to confession for our sins. The Jewish state is here called an *inhabitant of Lebanon*, because that famous forest was within their border, (v. 23.) and all their country was wealthy, and well guarded as with Lebanon’s natural fastnesses; but so proud and haughty were they, that they are said to *make their nest in the cedars*, where they thought themselves out of the reach of all danger, and whence they looked with contempt upon all about them. “*But, how gracious wilt thou be when pangs come upon thee!* Then thou wilt humble thyself before God, and promise amendment. When thou art overthrown in stony places, thou wilt be glad to hear those words which in thy prosperity thou wouldst not hear, Ps. cxli. 6. Then thou wilt endeavour to make thyself acceptable with that God whom, before, thou madest light of.” Note, Many have their pangs of piety, who, when the pangs are over, show that they have no true piety. Some give another sense of it; “*What will all thy pomp, and state, and wealth avail thee? What will become of it all, or what comfort shalt thou have of it, when thou shalt be in these distresses?* No more than a woman in travail, full of pains and fears, can take comfort in her ornaments while she is in that condition.” So Mr. Gataker. Note, Those that are proud of their worldly advantages, would do well to consider how they will look when pangs come up on them, and how they will then have lost all their beauty.

II. Here is a prophecy of the disgrace of the king; his name was *Jeconiah*, but he is here once and again called *Coniah*, in contempt. The prophet shortens his name, and gives him, as we say, a nickname, perhaps to denote that he should be despoiled of his dignity, that his reign should be shortened, and the number of his months cut off in the midst. Two instances of dishonour are here put upon him.

1. He shall be carried away into captivity, and shall spend and end his days in bondage. He was born to a crown, but it should quickly fall from his head, and he should exchange it for fetters. Observe the steps of this judgment.

(1.) God will abandon him, v. 24. The God of truth says it, and confirms it with an oath; “*Though he were the signet upon my right hand*, (his predecessors have been so, and he might have been so, if he had conducted himself well; but he being degenerated.) *I will pluck him thence*.” The godly kings of Judah had been as signets on God’s right hand, near and dear to him; he had gloried in them, and made use of them as instruments of his government, as the prince does of his signet-ring, or sign-manual: but Coniah has made himself utterly unworthy of the honour, and therefore the privilege of his birth shall be no security to him; notwithstanding that, he shall be thrown off. Answerable to this threatening against Jeconiah is God’s promise to Zerubbabel, when he made him his people’s guide in their return out of captivity; (Hag. ii. 23.) *I will take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, and make thee as a signet*. Those that think themselves as signets on God’s right hand, must not be secure, but fear lest they be plucked thence.

(2.) The king of Babylon shall seize him. *Those* knew not what enemies and mischiefs they lie exposed to, who have thrown themselves out of God's protection, v. 25. The Chaldeans are here said to be such as had a spite to *Coniah*, they *sought his life*; no less than that, they thought, would satisfy their rage; they were such as he had a dread of, (They are those *whose face thou fearest*,) which would make it the more terrible to him to fall into their hands, especially when it was God himself that gave him into their hands. And if God deliver him to them, who can deliver him from them?

(3.) He and his family shall be carried to Babylon, where they shall wear out the many tedious years of their lives in a miserable captivity; *he and his mother*, (v. 26.) *he and his seed*, (v. 28.) he and all the royal family, (for he had no children of his own when he went into captivity,) or, he and the children of his loins; they shall all be cast out to another country, to a strange country, *a country where they were not born*, nor such a country as that where they were born, *a land which they know not*, in which they have no acquaintance with whom to converse, or from whom to expect any kindness. Thither they shall be carried, from a land where they were entitled to dominion, into a land where they shall be compelled to servitude. But have they no hopes of seeing their own country again? No, *To the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return*, v. 27. They conducted themselves ill in it, when they were in it, and therefore they shall never see it more. Jehoahaz was carried to Egypt, the land of the south, (v. 10.) Jeconiah to Babylon, the land of the north, both far remote, the quite contrary way, and must never expect to meet again, nor either of them to breathe their native air again. Those that had abused the dominion they had over others, were justly brought thus under the dominion of others. Those that had indulged and gratified their sinful desires, by their oppression, luxury, and cruelty, were justly denied the gratification of their incontinent desire to see their own native country again. We may observe something very emphatical in that part of this threatening, (v. 26.) *In the country where ye were not born, there shall ye die*. As there is a time to be born, and a time to die, so there is a place to be born in, and a place to die in. We know where we were born, but where we shall die we know not; it is enough that our God knows. Let it be our care that we die in Christ, and then it will be well with us wherever we die, though it should be in a far country.

(4.) This shall render him very mean and despicable in the eyes of all his neighbours. They shall be ready to say, (v. 28.) *Is this Coniah a despised, broken idol?* Yes, certainly he is, and much debased from what he was." [1.] Time was when he was dignified, nay, when he was almost deified. This people, who had seen his father lately deposed, were ready to adore him when they saw him upon the throne; but now he is a *despised, broken idol*, which, when it was whole, was worshipped, but, when it is rotten and broken, is thrown by and *despised*, and nobody regards it, or remembers what it has been. Note, What is idolized will, first or last, be *despised and broken*; what is unjustly honoured, will be justly contemned, and rivals with God will be the scorn of man. Whatever we idolize we shall be disappointed in, and then shall *despise*. [2.] Time was, when he was delighted in; but now he is a *vessel in which is no pleasure*, or to which there is no desire, either because grown out of fashion, or because cracked or dirtied, and so rendered unserviceable. Those whom God has no pleasure in, will, some time or other, be so mortified, that men will have no pleasure in them.

2. He shall leave no posterity to inherit his ho-

nour. The prediction of this is ushered in with a solemn preface, (v. 29.) *O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord*. Let all the inhabitants of the world take notice of these judgments of God upon a nation and a family that had been near and dear to him, and thence infer that God is impartial in the administration of justice. Or, it is an appeal to the earth itself, on which we tread, since these that dwell on earth are so deaf and careless, like that, (Isa. i. 2.) *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth*. God's word, however slighted, will be heard; the earth itself will be made to hear it, and yield to it, when it, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Or, it is a call to men that *mind earthly things*, that are swallowed up in those things, and are inordinate in the pursuit of them; such have need to be called upon again and again, and a third time, to *hear the word of the Lord*. Or, it is a call to men, considered as mortal, of the earth, and hastening to the earth again; we all are so, earth we are, *dust we are*, and, in consideration of that, are concerned to hear and regard *the word of the Lord*, that, though we are earth, we may be found among those whose names are written in heaven.

Now that which is here to be taken notice of, is, that Jeconiah is *written childless*, (v. 30.) that is, as it follows, *No man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David*. In him the line of David was extinct as a royal line. Some think that he had children born in Babylon, because mention is made of his seed being cast out there, (v. 28.) and that they died before him. We read in the genealogy, (1 Chron. iii. 17.) of seven sons of Jeconiah Assir, that is, Jeconiah the captive, of which Salathiel is the first. Some think that they were only his adopted sons, and that, when it is said, (Matth. i. 12.) *Jeconiah begat Salathiel*, no more is meant than that he bequeathed to him what claims and pretensions he had to the government; the rather, because Salathiel is called the *son of Neri*, (Luke iii. 27.) *of the house of Nathan*, v. 31. Whether he had children begotten, or only adopted, thus far he was *childless*, that *none of his seed* ruled as kings in Judah. He was the *Augustulus* of that empire, in whom it determined. Whoever are childless, it is God that writes them so; and those who take no care to do good in their days, cannot expect to *prosper in their days*.

CHAP. XXIII.

In this chapter, the prophet, in God's name, is dealing his reproofs and threatenings, I. Among the careless princes, or pastors of the people; (v. 1, 2.) yet promising to take care of the flock, which they had been wanting in their duty to, v. 3.. 8. II. Among the wicked prophets and priests, whose bad character is here given at large in divers instances, especially their imposing upon the people with their pretended inspirations, at which the prophet is astonished, and for which they must expect to be punished, v. 9.. 32. III. Among the profane people, who ridiculed God's prophets, and bantered them, v. 33.. 40. When all have thus corrupted their way, they must all expect to be told faithfully of it.

1. **WO** be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. 2. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people, Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD. 3. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring

them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4. And I will set up shepherds over them, which shall feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD. 5. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. 6. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. 7. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, *The LORD liveth*, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; 8. But, *The LORD liveth*, which brought up, and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

Here is,

I. A word of terror to the negligent shepherds; the day is at hand when God will reckon with them concerning the trust and charge committed to them; *Wo be to the pastors*, to the rulers, both in church and state, who should be to those they are set over as pastors to lead them, feed them, protect them, and take care of them. They are not owners of the sheep; God here calls them *the sheep of my pasture*, whom I am interested in, and have provided good pasture for. *Wo be* to those therefore who are commanded to feed God's people, and pretend to do it; but who, instead of that, *scatter the flock*, and *drive them away*, by their violence and oppression, and *have not visited them*, nor taken any care for their welfare, nor concerned themselves at all to do them good. In *not visiting* them, and doing their duty to them, they did in effect *scatter* them, and *drive them away*. The beasts of prey scattered them, and the shepherds are in the fault, who should have kept them together. *Wo be to them*, when God will visit upon them the evil of their doings, and deal with them as they deserve. They would not visit the flock in a way of duty, and therefore God will visit them in a way of vengeance.

II. Here is a word of comfort to the neglected sheep. Though the under-shepherds take no care of them, no pains with them, but betray them, the chief Shepherd will look after them; *When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord taketh me up*. Though the interests of God's church in the world are neglected by those who should take care of them, and postponed to their own private secular interests, yet they shall not therefore sink. God will perform his promise, though those he employs do not perform their duty.

1. The dispersed Jews shall at length return to their own land, and be happily settled there under a good government, v. 3, 4. Though there be but a remnant of God's flock left, a little remnant, that has narrowly escaped destruction, he will gather that remnant; will find them out wherever they are, and find out ways and means to bring them back out of all countries whither he had driven them. It was the justice of God, for the sin of their shepherds, that dispersed them; but the mercy of God shall gather in the sheep, when the shepherds

that betrayed them are cut off. *They shall be brought* to their former habitations, as sheep to their folds, and there they shall be *fruitful, and increase* in numbers. And though their former shepherds took no care of them, it does not therefore follow that they shall have no more. If some have abused a sacred office, that is no good reason why it should be abolished; "They destroyed the sheep, but I will set shepherds over them, which shall make it their business to feed them." Formerly, they were continually exposed and disturbed with some alarm or other; but now *they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed*; they shall be in no danger from without, in no fright from within. Formerly, some or other of them were ever and anon picked up by the beasts of prey; but now *none of them shall be lacking*, none of them missing. Though the times may have been long bad with the church, it does not follow, that they will be ever so. Such pastors as Zerubbabel and Nehemiah were, though they lived not in the pomp that Jehoiakim and Jeconiah did, nor made such a figure, were as great blessings to the people as the others were plagues to them. The church's peace is not bound up in the pomp of her rulers.

2. Messiah the Prince, that great and good Shepherd of the sheep, shall in the latter days be raised up to bless his church, and to be the Glory of his people Israel, v. 5, 6. The house of David seemed to be quite sunk and ruined by that threatening against Jeconiah, (ch. xxii. 30.) that none of his seed should ever sit upon the throne of David; but here is a promise which effectually secures the honour of the covenant made with David notwithstanding; for by it the house will be raised out of its ruins to a greater lustre than ever, and shine brighter far than it did in Solomon himself. We have not so many prophecies of Christ in this book as we had in that of the prophet Isaiah; but here we have one, and a very illustrious one; of him doubtless the prophet here speaks, of him, and of no other man. The first words intimate, that it would be long ere this promise should have its accomplishment; *The days come*, but they are not yet; I shall see him, but not now; but all the rest intimate that the accomplishment of them will be glorious.

(1.) Christ is here spoken of as a *Branch from David*, the *Man the Branch*; (Zech. iii. 8.) his appearance mean, his beginnings small, like those of a bud or sprout, and his rise seemingly out of the earth, but growing to be green, to be great, to be loaded with fruits. A branch from David's family, when it seemed to be a *root in a dry ground*, buried, and not likely to revive. Christ is the *Root and Offspring of David*, Rev. xxii. 16. In him doth the *horn of David bud*, Ps. cxxxii. 17, 18. He is a Branch of God's raising up; he sanctified him, and sent him into the world, gave him his commission and qualifications. He is a righteous Branch, for he is righteous himself, and through him many, even all that are his, are made righteous; as an Advocate, he is *Jesus Christ the righteous*.

(2.) He is here spoken of as his church's King. This Branch shall be raised as high as the throne of his father David, and there *he shall reign and prosper*, not as the kings that now were of the house of David, who went backward in all their affairs; no, he shall set up a kingdom in the world, that shall be victorious over all opposition. In the chariot of the everlasting gospel he shall go forth, he shall go on *conquering and to conquer*. If God raise him up, he will prosper him, for he will own the work of his own hands; what is the *good pleasure of the Lord*, shall prosper in the hands of those to whom it is committed. He shall prosper, for he shall execute judgment and justice in the earth, all the world over; Ps. cvi. 13. The present kings of the

house of David were unjust and oppressive, and therefore it is no wonder that they did not prosper; but Christ shall, by his gospel, break the usurped power of Satan, institute a perfect rule of holy living, and, as far as it prevails, make all the world righteous. The effect of this shall be a holy security and serenity of mind in all his faithful, loyal subjects. *In his days, under his dominion, Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely;* all the spiritual seed of believing Abraham and praying Jacob shall be protected from the curse of heaven and the malice of hell; shall be privileged from the arrests of God's law, and delivered from the attempts of Satan's power; shall be saved from sin, the guilt and dominion of it, and then shall *dwell safely*, and be quiet from the fear of all evil. See Luke i. 74, 75. Those that shall be saved hereafter from the wrath to come, may *dwell safely* now; for *if God be for us, who can be against us?* In the days of Christ's government in the soul, when he is uppermost there, the soul *dwells at ease*.

(3.) He is here spoken of as *The Lord our Righteousness*. Observe,

[1.] Who and what he is. As God, he is *Jehovah*, the incommunicable name of God, denoting his eternity and self-existence. As Mediator, he is *our Righteousness*; by making satisfaction to the justice of God for the sin of man, he has brought in an everlasting righteousness, and so made it over to us in the covenant of grace, that, upon our believing consent to that covenant, it becomes ours. His being *Jehovah our Righteousness* implies that he is so *our Righteousness*, as no creature could be. He is a sovereign, all-sufficient, eternal Righteousness. All our righteousness has its being from him, and by him it subsists, and we are made the righteousness of God in him. [2.] The profession and declaration of this; *This is the name whereby he shall be called*; not only he shall be so, but he shall be known to be so. God shall call him by this name, for he shall appoint him to be *our Righteousness*. By this name Israel shall call him, every true believer shall call him, and call upon him. That is *our righteousness*, by which, as an allowed plea, we are justified before God, acquitted from guilt, and accepted into favour; and nothing else have we to plead but this, "Christ has died, yea, rather, is risen again;" and we have taken him for our Lord.

3. This great salvation, which will come to the Jews in the latter days of their state, after their return out of Babylon, shall be so illustrious as far to outshine the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt; (v. 7, 8.) *They shall no more say, The Lord liveth, that brought up Israel out of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, that brought them up out of the north.* This we had before, ch. xvi. 14, 15. But here it seems to point more plainly than it did there to the days of the Messiah, and to compare not so much the two deliverances themselves, giving the preference to the latter, as the two states to which the church by degrees grew after those deliverances. Observe the proportion: Just 480 years after they were come out of Egypt, Solomon's temple was built, (1 Kings vi. 1.) and at that time that nation, which was so wonderfully brought up out of Egypt, was gradually arrived to its height, to its zenith. Just 490 years (70 weeks) after they came out of Babylon, Messiah the Prince set up the gospel-temple, which was the greatest glory of that nation that was so wonderfully brought out of Babylon; see Dan. ix. 24, 25. Now the spiritual glory of the second part of that nation, especially as transferred to the gospel-church, is much more admirable and illustrious than all the temporal glory of the first part of it in the days of Solomon; for that was no glory, compared with the glory which excelleth.

9. My heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake: I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness.

10. For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth, the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. 11. For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD. 12.

Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness; they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, *even* the year of their visitation, saith the LORD. 13. And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. 14. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem a horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evil-doers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. 15. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets, Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land. 16. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you; they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, *and not out of the mouth of the LORD*.

17. They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. 18. For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it? 19. Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. 20. The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed, the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly. 21. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. 22. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. 23. *Am I a God at hand*, saith the LORD, *and not a God afar off?* 24. Can any hide

himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD. 25. I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. 26. How long shall *this* be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, *they are* prophets of the deceit of their own heart; 27. Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams, which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. 28. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. 29. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? 30. Therefore, behold, I *am* against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my word, every one from his neighbour. 31. Behold, I *am* against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. 32. Behold, I *am* against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.

Here is a long lesson for the false prophets. As none were more bitter and spiteful against God's true prophets than they, so there were none on whom the true prophets were more severe, and justly. The prophet had complained to God of those false prophets, (*ch. xiv. 13.*) and had often foretold that they should be involved in the common ruin; but here they have woes of their own.

I. He expresses the deep concern that he was under, upon this account, and what a trouble it was to him to see men who pretended to a divine commission and inspiration, ruining themselves, and the people among whom they dwelt, by their falsehood and treachery; (*v. 9.*) *My heart within me is broken, I am like a drunken man.* His head was in confusion with wonder and astonishment, his heart was under oppression with grief and vexation. Jeremiah was a man that laid things much to heart, and what was any way threatening to his country, made a deep impression upon his spirits. He is here in trouble, 1. *Because of the prophets*, and their sin, the false doctrine they preached, the wicked lives they lived; especially it filled him with horror, to hear them making use of God's name, and pretending to have their instructions from him. Never was the Lord so abused, and the words of his holiness, as by these men. Note, The dishonour done to God's name, and the profanation of his holy word, are the greatest grief imaginable to a gracious soul. 2. *Because of the Lord*, and his judgments, which by this means are brought in upon us like a deluge. He trembled to think of the ruin and desolation which were coming from the face of the Lord, (so the word is,) and from the face of the word of his holiness, which will be inflicted by the power of God's wrath, according to the threatenings of his

word, confirmed by his holiness. Note, Even those that have God for them, cannot but tremble to think of the misery of those that have God against them.

II. He laments the abounding abominable wickedness of the land, and the present tokens of God's displeasure they were under for it; (*v. 10.*) *The land is full of adulterers*, it is full both of spiritual and corporal whoredom; they go a whoring from God, and, having cast off the fear of him, no marvel that they abandon themselves to all manner of lewdness; and having dishonoured themselves and their own bodies, they dishonour God and his name by rash and false swearing, *because of which the land mourns.* Both perjury and common swearing are sins, for which a land must mourn in true repentance, or it will be made to mourn under the judgments of God. Their land mourned now under the judgment of famine; the pleasant places, or, rather, the pastures, or, as some read it, the habitations of the wilderness, are dried up for want of rain, and yet we see no signs of repentance; they answer not the end of the correction: the tenour and tendency of men's conversations are sinful, their course continues evil, as bad as ever, and they will not be diverted from it. They have a great deal of resolution, but it is turned the wrong way, they are *zealously affected*, but not in a good thing, their force is not right; their heart is fully set in them to do evil, and they are not valiant for the truth, have not courage enough to break off their evil courses, though they see God thus contending with them.

III. He charges it all upon the prophets and priests, especially the prophets. They are both *profane*; (*v. 11.*) the priests profane the ordinances of God they pretend to administer, the prophets profane the word of God they pretend to deliver; their converse and all their conversation are profane, and then it is not strange that the people are so debauched. They both *play the hypocrite*; so some read it; under sacred pretensions they carry on the vilest designs; yea, not only in their own houses, and the bad houses they frequent, but in *my house have I found their wickedness*; in the temple, where the priests ministered, where the prophets prophesied, there were they guilty both of idolatry and immorality. See a woful instance in Hophni and Phinehas, 1 Sam. ii. 22. God searches his house, and what wickedness is there he will find it out; and the nearer it is to him, the more offensive it is. Two things are charged upon them:

1. That they taught people to sin by their examples. He compares them with the prophets of Samaria, the head city of the kingdom of the ten tribes, which had been long since laid waste. It was the folly of the prophets of Samaria, that *they prophesied in Baal*, in Baal's name; so Ahab's prophets did, and so they caused my people Israel to err, to forsake the service of the true God, and to worship Baal, *v. 13.* Now the prophets of Jerusalem did not do so, they prophesied in the name of the true God, and valued themselves upon that, that they were not like the prophets of Samaria, who prophesied in Baal; but what the better, when they debauched the nation as much by their immoralities as the other had done by their idolatries? It is a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem, that they make use of the name of the holy God, and yet wallow in all manner of impurity! they make nothing of committing adultery, they make use of the name of the God of truth, and yet *walk in lies*, they not only prophesy lies, but in their common conversation one cannot believe a word they say. It is all either jest and banter, or fraud and design. Thus they encourage sinners to go on in their wicked ways; for every one will say, "Surely we may do as the prophets do; who can expect that we

should be better than our teachers?" By this means it is, that none returns from his wickedness; but they all say that they shall have *peace*, though they go on, for their prophets tell them so. By this means Judah and Jerusalem are become as Sodom and Gomorrah, that were wicked, and *sinner before the Lord exceedingly*; and God looked upon them accordingly, as fit for nothing but to be destroyed, as they were, with fire and brimstone.

2. That they *encouraged people in sin* by their *false prophecies*. They made themselves believe that there was no harm, no danger in sin, and practised accordingly; and then no marvel that they made others believe so too, *v. 16. They speak a vision of their own heart*; it is the product of their own invention, and agrees with their own inclination, but it is *not out of the mouth of the Lord*; he never dictated it to them, nor does it agree either with the law of Moses, or with what God has spoken by other prophets. They tell sinners that it shall be well with them, though they persist in their sins, *v. 17.* See here who they are that they encourage; those that *despise God*, that slight his authority, and have low and mean thoughts of his institutions, and those that *walk after the imagination of their own heart*, that are worshippers of idols, and slaves to their own lusts; those that are devoted to their pleasures, put contempt upon their God. Yet see how these prophets caressed and flattered them; they should have been still saying, There is no peace to them that go on in their evil ways; Those that despise God, shall be *lightly esteemed*; Wo, and a thousand woes, to them; but they still said, *Ye shall have peace, no evil shall come upon you.* And, which was worst of all, they told them, *God has said so*; so making him to patronise sin, and to contradict himself. Note, Those that are resolved to go on in their evil ways, will justly be given up to believe the strong delusions of those who tell them that they shall have *peace*, though they go on.

IV. God disowns all that these false prophets said to soothe people up in their sins; (*v. 21.*) *I have not sent these prophets*; they never had any mission from God, they were not only not sent by him on his errand, but they were never sent by him on any errand, he never had employed them in any service or business for him; and as to this matter, whereas they pretended to have instructions from him to assure this people of *peace*, he declares that he never gave them any such instructions; yet they were very forward, they *ran*, they were very bold, they *prophesied* without any of that difficulty with which the true prophets sometimes struggled. They said to sinners, *You shall have peace.* But *v. 18. "Who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord? Who of you has, that are so confident of this? You deliver this message with a great deal of assurance; but have you consulted God about it? No, you never considered whether it be agreeable to the discoveries God has made of himself, whether it will consist with the honour of his holiness and justice, to let sinners go unpunished. You have not perceived and heard his word, nor marked that, you have not compared this with the scripture; if you had taken notice of that, and of the constant tencour of it, you would never have delivered such a message."* The prophets themselves must try the spirits by the touchstone of the law and of the testimony, as well as those to whom they prophesy; but which of those did so, that prophesied of peace? That they did not stand in *God's counsel* nor hear his word, is proved afterward, *v. 22. If they had stood in my counsel*, as they pretend, 1. They would have made the scriptures their standard; *They would have caused my people to hear my words*, and would have conscientiously kept close to them. But, not speaking according to that rule, it is a plain evidence that

there is no light in them. 2. They would have made the conversion of souls their business, and would have aimed at that in all their preaching; they would have done all they could to *turn people from their evil way* in general, from all the particular evil of their doings. They would have encouraged and assisted, the reformation of manners, would have made this their scope in all their preaching, to part between men and their sins; but it appeared that this was a thing they never aimed at, but, on the contrary, to encourage sinners in their sins. 5. They would have had some seals of their ministry. This sense our translation gives it; If they had *stood in my counsel*, and the words they had preached had been *my words*, then they should have *turned them from their evil way*; a divine power should have gone along with the word for the conviction of sinners; God will bless his own institutions. Yet this is no certain rule; Jeremiah himself, though God sent him, prevailed with but few to *turn from their evil way*.

V. God threatens to punish these prophets for their wickedness. They promised the people *peace*; to show them the folly of that, God tells them that they should have no peace themselves; they were very unfit to warrant the people, and pass their word to them, that no evil shall come upon them, when all evil is coming upon themselves, and they are not aware of it, *v. 12.* Because the prophets and priests are profane, *therefore their ways shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness.* They that undertake to lead others, because they mislead them, and know they do so, they shall themselves have no comfort in their way. 1. They pretend to show others the way, but they shall themselves be in the dark, or in a mist; their light or sight shall fail, so that they shall not be able to look before them, shall have no forecast for themselves. 2. They pretend to give assurances to others, but they themselves shall find no firm footing; *Their ways shall be to them as slippery ways*, in which they shall not go with any steadiness, safety, or satisfaction. 3. They pretend to make the people easy with their flatteries, but they shall themselves be uneasy: *They shall be driven*, forced forward as captives, or making their escape as those that are pursued, and *they shall fall in the way* by which they hoped to escape, and so fall into the enemies' hands. 4. They pretend to prevent the evils that threatens others, but God will *bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation*, the time fixed for calling them to an account; such a time is fixed concerning all that do not judge themselves, and it will be an evil time. *The year of visitation* is the year of recompenses. It is further threatened, (*v. 15.*) *I will feed them with wormwood*, or poison, with that which is not only nauseous, but noxious, and *make them drink waters of gall*, or, as some read it, *juice of hemlock*; see *ch. ix. 15.* Justly is the cup of trembling put into their hand first, for *from the prophets of Jerusalem*, who should have been patterns of piety and every thing that is praise-worthy, even *from them is profaneness gone forth into all the lands.* Nothing more effectually debauches a nation, than the debauchery of ministers.

VI. The people are here warned not to give any credit to these false prophets; for though they flattered them with hopes of impunity, the judgments of God would certainly break out against them, unless they repented; (*v. 16.*) "Take notice of what God says, and *hearken not to the words of these prophets*; for you will find, in the issue, that God's word shall stand, and not theirs. God's word will make you serious, but *they make you vain*, feed you with vain hopes, which will fail you at last. They tell you, *No evil shall come upon you*; but hear what God says, (*v. 19.*) *Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is*

gone forth in fury: they tell you, All shall be calm and serene; but God tells you, There is a storm coming, a *whirlwind of the Lord*, of his sending, and therefore there is no standing before it; it is a *whirlwind* raised by divine wrath; it is *gone forth in fury*, a wind that is brought forth out of the treasures of divine vengeance, and therefore it is a *grievous whirlwind*, and shall light heavy, with rain and hail, upon the head of the wicked, which they cannot avoid, nor find any shelter from." It shall fall upon the wicked prophets themselves who deceived the people, and the wicked people who suffered themselves to be deceived. A *horrible tempest* shall be the portion of their cup, Ps. xi. 6. This sentence is bound on as irrevocable; (v. 20.) *The anger of the Lord shall not return*, for the decree is gone forth, God will not alter his mind, nor suffer his anger to be turned away, till he have executed the sentence, and performed the thoughts of his heart. God's whirlwind, when it comes down from heaven, returns not thither, but accomplishes that for which he sent it, Isa. lv. 11. This they will not consider now; But in the latter days he shall consider it perfectly, consider it with understanding, (so the word is), or, with consideration. Note, Those that will not fear the threatenings, shall feel the execution of them, and will then perfectly understand what they will not now admit the evidence of, what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of a just and jealous God. They that will not consider in time, will be made to consider when it is too late. *Son, remember.*

VII. Divers things are here offered to the consideration of these false prophets for their conviction, that, if possible, they might be brought to recant their error, and acknowledge the cheat they had put upon God's people.

1. Let them consider, that though they may impose upon men, God is too wise to be imposed upon. Men cannot see through their fallacies, but God can, and does. Here,

(1.) God asserts his own omnipresence and omniscience in general, v. 23, 24. When they told the people that *no evil* should befall them though they went on in their evil ways, they went upon atheistical principles, that the Lord doth not see their sin, that he cannot judge through the dark cloud, that he will not require it; and therefore they must be taught the first principles of their religion, and confronted with the most incontestable, self-evident truths. [1.] That though God's throne is prepared in the heavens, and this earth seems to be at a distance from him, yet he is a God here in this lower world, which seems to be afar off, as well as in the upper world, which seems to be at hand, v. 23. The eye of God is the same on earth that it is in heaven; here it runs to and fro as well as there; (2 Chron. xvi. 9.) and what is in the minds of men, whose spirits are veiled in flesh, is as clearly seen by him, as what is in the mind of angels, those unveiled spirits above, that surround his throne. The power of God is the same on earth among its inhabitants that it is in heaven among his armies. With us, nearness and distance make a great difference both in our observations and in our operations, but it is not so with God; to him darkness and light, at hand, and afar off, are both alike. [2.] That how ingenious and industrious sower men are to disguise themselves and their own characters and counsels, they cannot possibly be concealed from God's all-seeing eye; (v. 24.) "Can any hide himself in the secret places of the earth, that I shall not see him? Can any hide his projects and intentions in the secret places of the heart, that I shall not see them?" No arts of concealment can hide from the eye of God, nor deceive his judgment of them. [3.] That he is every where present; he does not only rule heaven and earth, and uphold both by his universal providence,

but he fills heaven and earth by his essential presence, Ps. cxxxviii. 7, 8, &c. No place can either include him, or exclude him.

(2.) He applies this to these prophets, who had a notable art of disguising themselves; (v. 23, 26.) *I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name.* They thought that he was so wholly taken up with the other world, that he had no leisure to take cognizance of what passed in this. But God will make them know that he knows all their impostures, all the shams they have put upon the world, under colour of divine revelation. What they intended to humour the people with, they pretended to have had from God in a dream, when there was no such thing. This they could not discover; if a man tell me that he dreamed so and so, I cannot contradict him; he knows I cannot; but God discovered the fraud. Perhaps the false prophets whispered what they had to say in the ears of such as were their confidants, saying, So and so I have dreamed; but God overheard them. The heart-searching eye of God traced them in all the methods they took to deceive the people, and he cries out, *How long?* Shall I always bear with them? Is it in the hearts of those prophets (so some read it) to be ever prophesying lies, and prophesying the deceits of their own hearts? Will they never see what an affront they put upon God, what an abuse they put upon the people, and what judgments they are preparing for themselves?

2. Let them consider that their palming upon people counterfeit revelations, and fathering their own fancies upon divine inspiration, was the ready way to bring all religion into contempt, and make men turn atheists and infidels; and this was the thing they really intended, though they frequently made mention of the name of God, and prefaced all they said with, *Thus saith the Lord.* Yet, says God, *They think to cause my people to forget my name, by their dreams.* They designed to draw people off from the worship of God, from all regard to God's laws and ordinances, and the true prophets, as their fathers forgot God's name for Baal. Note, The great thing Satan aims at, is, to make people forget God, and all that whereby he has made himself known; and he has many subtle methods to bring them to this: sometimes he does it by setting up false gods; (bring men in love with Baal, and they soon forget the name of God;) sometimes by misrepresenting the true God, as if he were altogether such a one as ourselves. Pretences to new revelation may prove as dangerous to religion as the denying of all revelation; and false prophets in God's name may perhaps do more mischief to the power of godliness than false prophets in Baal's name, as being less guarded against.

3. Let them consider what a vast difference there was between their prophecies and those that were delivered by the true prophets of the Lord; (v. 28.) *The prophet that has a dream*, which was the way of inspiration that the false prophets most pretended to, if he has a dream, let him tell it as a dream; so Mr. Gataker reads it. "Let him lay no more stress upon it than men do upon their dreams, nor expect any more regard to be had to it; let them not say that it is from God, nor call their foolish dreams divine oracles; but let the true prophet, that has my word, speak my word faithfully, speak it as a truth;" (so some read it;) "let him keep close to his instructions, and you will soon perceive a vast difference between the dreams that the false prophets tell, and the divine dictates which the true prophets deliver; he that pretends to have a message from God, whether by dream or voice, let him declare it, and it will easily appear which is of God, and which is not. Those that have spiritual senses exercised will be able to distinguish; for what is the

chaff to the wheat? The promises of peace which these prophets make to you, are no more to be compared to God's promises, than chaff to wheat. Men's fancies are light, and vain, and worthless, as the chaff which the wind drives away. But the word of God has substance in it; it is of value, is food for the soul, the bread of life. Wheat was the staple commodity of Canaan, that valley of vision, Deut. viii. 8. Ezck. xxvii. 17. There is as much difference between the vain fancies of men, and the pure word of God, as between the *chaff* and the *wheat*. It follows, (v. 29.) *Is not my word like a fire, saith the Lord?* Is their word so? Has it the power and efficacy that the word of God has? No, nothing like it; there is no more comparison than between painted fire and real fire. Theirs is like an *ignis fatuus*—a *deceiving meteor*, leading men into by-paths and dangerous precipices. Note, The word of God is like fire. The law was a fiery law; (Deut. xxxii. 2.) and of the gospel, Christ says, *I am come to send fire on the earth*, Luke xii. 49. Fire has different effects, according as the matter is on which it works; it hardens clay, but softens wax; it consumes the dross, but purifies the gold; so the word of God is to some a *savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death*. God appeals here to the consciences of those to whom the word was sent; "*Is not my word like fire?* Has it not been so to you? Zech. i. 6. Speak as you have found." It is compared likewise to a *hammer breaking the rock in pieces*. The unhumiliated heart of man is like a rock; if it will not be melted by the word of God as the fire, it will be *broken to pieces* by it as the *hammer*. Whatever opposition is given to the word, it will be borne down and broken to pieces.

4. Let them consider that while they went on in this course, God was *against them*. Three times they are told this, v. 30, 31, 32. Behold, *I am against the prophets*. They pretended to be for God, and made use of his name, but were really against him; he looks upon them as they were really, and is *against* them. How can they be long safe, or at all easy, that have a God of almighty power against them? While these prophets were promising peace to the people, God was proclaiming war against them. They stand indicted here,

(1.) For robbery; *They steal my word every one from his neighbour*. Some understand it of that word which the good prophets preached; they stole their sermons, their expressions, and mingled them with their own, as hucksters mingled bad wares with some that are good, to make them vendible. Those that were strangers to the spirit of the true prophets, mimicked their language, picked up some good sayings of theirs, and delivered them to the people as if they had been their own, but with an ill grace; it was not of a piece with the rest of their discourses. *The legs of the lame are not equal, so is a parable in the mouth of fools*, Prov. xxvi. 7. Others understand it of the word of God as it was received and entertained by some of the people; *they stole it out of their hearts*, as the wicked one in the parable is said to *steal the good seed of the word*, Matth. xiii. 19. By their insinuations they diminished the authority, and so weakened the efficacy, of the word of God upon the minds of those that seemed to be under convictions by it.

(2.) They stand indicted for counterfeiting the broad seal. *Therefore God is against them*, (v. 31.) because they *use their tongues* at their pleasure in their discourses to the people, they say what they themselves think fit, and then father it upon God, pretend they had it from him, and say, *He saith it*. Some read it, *They smooth their tongues*; they are very complaisant to the people, and say nothing but what is pleasing and plausible; they never reprove them or threaten them, but their words are *smoother*

than butter; thus they ingratiate themselves with them, and get money by them, and they have the impudence and impiety to make God the Patron of their lies; they say, "He saith so." What greater indignity can be done to the God of truth than to lay the brats of the father of lies at his door?

(3.) They stand indicted as common cheats; (v. 32.) *I am against them*, for they *prophecy false dreams*, pretending that to be a divine inspiration, which is but an invention of their own; this is a horrid fraud; nor will it excuse them to say, *Caveat emptor—Let the buyer take care of himself, and Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur—If people will be deceived, let them*. No, it is the people's fault, that they err, that they take things upon trust, and do not try the spirits; but it is much more their fault, that they cause God's people to *err by their lies*, and by their lightness, by the flatteries of their preaching, soothing them up in their sins, and by the looseness and lewdness of their conversation, encouraging them to persist in them. [1.] God disowns their having any commission from him; *I sent them not, nor commanded them*; they are not God's messengers, nor is what they say his message. [2.] He therefore justly denies his blessing with them, *Therefore they shall not profit this people at all*. All the profit they aim at is, to make them easy; but they shall not so much as do that, for God's providences will at the same time be making them uneasy. *They do not profit this people*; so some read it; and more is implied than is expressed; they not only do them no good, but do them a great deal of hurt. Note, Those that corrupt the word of God, while they pretend to preach it, are so far from edifying the church, that they do it the greatest mischief imaginable.

33. And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the LORD? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD. 34. And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house. 35. Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbour, and every one to his brother, What hath the LORD answered? and, What hath the LORD spoken? 36. And the burden of the LORD shall ye mention no more; for every man's word shall be his burden: for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of hosts our God. 37. Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the LORD answered thee? and, What hath the LORD spoken? 38. But since ye say, The burden of the LORD; therefore thus saith the LORD, Because you say this word, The burden of the LORD, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the LORD; 39. Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence: 40. And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.

The profaneness of the people, with that of the

priests and prophets, is here reprov'd in a particular instance, which may seem of small moment in comparison of their greater crimes; but profaneness in common discourse, and the debauching of the language of a nation, being a notorious evidence of the prevalency of wickedness in it, we are not to think it strange that this matter was so largely and warmly insisted upon here. Observe,

1. The sin here charged upon them is, bantering God's prophets, and the dialect they used, and jesting with sacred things. They asked, *What is the burthen of the Lord?* v. 33. and v. 34. They say, *The burthen of the Lord*, v. 38. This was the word that gave great offence to God, that, whenever they spoke of the word of the Lord, they called it, in scorn and derision, *the burthen of the Lord*. Now, (1.) This was the word that the prophets much used, and used it seriously, to show what a weight the word of God was upon their spirits, of what importance it was, and how pressingly it should come upon those that heard it. The words of the false prophets had nothing ponderous in them, but God's words had; those were as chaff, these as wheat. Now the profane scoffers took this word, and made a jest and a by-word of it; they made people merry with it, that so, when the prophets used it, they might not make people serious with it. Note, It has been the artifice of Satan, in all ages, to obstruct the efficacy of sacred things by turning them into matter of sport and ridicule; the mocking of God's messengers was the baffling of his messages. (2.) Perhaps this word was caught at and reproached by the scoffers as an improper word, new-coined by the prophets, and not used in that sense by any classic author. It was only in this and the last age, that the word of the Lord was called the *burthen of the Lord*, and it could not be found in their lexicons to have that signification. But if men take a liberty, as we see they do, to form new phrases which they think more expressive and significant in other parts of learning, why not in divinity? But especially we must observe it as a rule, that the Spirit of God is not tied to our rules of speaking. (3.) Some think that, because, when the word of the Lord is called a *burthen*, it signifies some word of reproof and threatening, which would lay a load upon the hearers, (yet I know not whether that observation will always hold,) that in using this word, the *burthen of the Lord*, in a canting way, they reflected upon God as always bearing hard upon them, always teasing them, always frightening them, and so making the word of God a perpetual uneasiness to them. They make the word of God a burthen to themselves, and then quarrel with the ministers for making it a burthen to them. Thus the scoffers of the latter days, while they slight heaven and salvation, reproach faithful ministers for preaching hell and damnation. Upon the whole, we may observe, That how light soever men may make of it, the great God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, those who burlesque sacred things, and who, that they may make a jest of scripture-truths and laws, put jests upon scripture-language. In such wit as this I am sure there is no wisdom, and so it will appear at last. *Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong.* Those that were here guilty of this sin, were some of the false prophets, who perhaps came to steal the word of God from the true prophets, some of the priests, who perhaps came to seek occasions against them, on which to ground an information, and some of the people, who had learned of the profane priests and prophets to play with the things of God. The people would not have affronted the prophet and his God thus, if the priests and the prophets, those ringleaders of mischief, had not shown them the way.

2 When they are reprov'd for this profane way

of speaking, they are directed how to express themselves more decently. We do not find that the prophets are directed to make no more use of this word; we find it used long after this; (*Zech. ix. 1. Mal. i. 1. Nah. i. 1. Hab. i. 1.*) and we do not find it once used in this sense by Jeremiah either before or after. It is true indeed, that in many cases it is advisable to make no use of such words and things as some have made bad use of, and it may be prudence to avoid such phrases as, though innocent enough, are in danger of being perverted and made stumbling-blocks. But here God will have the prophet keep to his rule; (*ch. xv. 19.*) *Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them.* Do not thou leave off using this word, but let them leave off abusing it; *ye shall not mention the burthen of the Lord any more* in this profane, careless manner, (v. 36.) for it is *perverting the words of the living God*, and making a bad use of them, which is an impious, dangerous thing; for consider, he is *the Lord of hosts our God*. Note, If we will but look upon God, as we ought to do, in his greatness and goodness, and be but duly sensible of our relation and obligation to him, it may be hoped that we shall not dare to affront him by making a jest of his words. It is an impudent thing to abuse him that is the *living God*, the *Lord of hosts* and *our God*. How then must they express themselves? He tells them, (v. 37.) *Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, when thou art inquiring of him, What hath the Lord answered thee? And what hath the Lord spoken?* And they must say thus, when they inquire of *their neighbours*, v. 35. Note, We must always speak of the things of God reverently and seriously, and as becomes *the oracles of God*. It is a commendable practice to inquire after the mind of God, to inquire of our brethren what they have heard, to inquire of our prophets what they have to say from God; but then, to show that we do it for a right end, we must do it after a right manner. Ministers may learn here, when they reprove people for what they say and do amiss, to teach them how to say and do better.

3. Because they would not leave off this bad way of speaking, though they were admonished of it, God threatens them here with utter ruin. They would still say, *The burthen of the Lord*, though God had sent to them to forbid them, v. 38. What little regard have those to the divine authority, that will not be persuaded by it to leave an idle word! But see what will come of it.

(1.) Those shall be severely reckon'd with, that thus *pervert the words of God*, that put a wrong construction on them, and make a bad use of them; and it shall be made to appear that it is a great provocation to God, to mock his messengers; *I will even punish that man and his house*, whether he be prophet or priest, or one of the common people, it shall be visited upon him, v. 34. Perverting God's word, and ridiculing the preachers of it, are sins that bring ruining judgments upon families, and entail a curse upon a house. Another threatening we have, v. 36. *Every man's word shall be his own burthen*; the guilt of this sin shall be so heavy upon him, as to sink him into the pit of destruction. God shall make *their own tongue to fall upon themselves*, Ps. lxiv. 8. God will give them enough of their jest, so that *the burthen of the Lord* they shall have no heart to mention any more; it will be too heavy to make a jest of. They are as the madman that casts firebrands, arrows, and death, while they pretend to be in sport.

(2.) The words of God, though thus perverted, shall be accomplished. Do they ask, *What is the burthen of the Lord?* Let the prophet ask them, *What burthen do you mean? Is it this? I will even forsake you*, v. 33. This is the burthen that shall

be laid and bound upon them, (v. 59, 40.) "*Behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you.*" I will leave you, and have no thoughts of returning to you. Those are miserable indeed, that are forsaken and forgotten of God; and men's bantering God's judgments will not baffle them. Jerusalem was the city God had taken to himself as a holy city, and then *given to them and their fathers*; but that shall now be forsaken and forgotten. God had taken them to be a people near to him, but they shall now be *cast out of his presence*. They had been great and honourable among the nations, but now God will bring upon them an *everlasting reproach and a perpetual shame*; both their sin and their punishment shall be their lasting disgrace. It is here upon record, to their infamy, and will remain so to the world's end. Note, God's word will be magnified and made honourable, when those that mock at it shall be vilified and made contemptible. *They that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.*

CHAP. XXIV.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we had a general prediction of the utter ruin of Jerusalem, that it should be forsaken and forgotten; which, whatever effect it had upon others, we have reason to think, made the prophet himself very melancholy. Now, in this chapter, God encourages him, by showing him that though the desolation seemed to be universal, yet all were not equally involved in it, but God knew how to distinguish, how to separate, between the precious and the vile. Some were gone into captivity already with Jeconiah, over them Jeremiah lamented, but God tells him that it should turn to their good; others yet remained hardened in their sins, against whom Jeremiah had a just indignation; but those, God tells him, should go into captivity, and it should prove to their hurt. To inform the prophet of this, and affect him with it; here is, I. A vision of two baskets of figs, one very good, and the other very bad, v. 1. .3. II. The explication of this vision, applying the good figs to those that were already sent into captivity for their good, (v. 4. .7.) the bad figs to those that should hereafter be sent into captivity for their hurt, v. 8. .10.

1. **THE LORD** shewed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the LORD, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoia-kim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. 2. One basket *had* very good figs, *even* like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket *had* very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad. 3. Then said the LORD unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. 4. Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 5. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah; whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for *their* good. 6. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. 7. And I will give them a heart to know me, that I *am* the LORD; and

they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart. 8. And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil; surely thus saith the LORD, So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt; 9. And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for *their* hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them. 10. And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers.

This short chapter helps us to put a very comfortable construction upon a great many long ones, by showing us that the same providence which to some is a *savour of death unto death*, may by the grace and blessing of God be made to others a *savour of life unto life*; and that though God's people share with others in the same calamity, yet that it is not the same to them that it is to others, but is designed for their good, and shall issue in their good; to them it is a correcting rod in the hand of a tender Father, while to others it is an avenging sword in the hand of a righteous Judge.

Observe, I. The date of this sermon. It was after, a little after, Jeconiah's captivity, v. 1. Jeconiah was himself a *despised, broken vessel*, but with him were carried away some very valuable persons, Ezekiel for one; (*ch. i. 2.*) many of the *princes of Judah* then went into captivity; Daniel and his fellows were carried off a little before; of the people only *the carpenters and the smiths* were forced away, either because the Chaldeans needed some ingenious men of those trades, (they had a great plenty of astrologers and stargazers, but a great scarcity of *smiths and carpenters*;) or because the Jews would severely feel the loss of them, and would, for want of them, be unable to fortify their cities, and furnish themselves with weapons of war. Now, it should seem, there were many good people carried away in that captivity, which the pious prophet laid much to heart, while there were those that triumphed in it, and insulted over those to whose lot it fell to go into captivity. Note, We must not conclude concerning the first and greatest sufferers, that they were the worst and greatest sinners; for perhaps it may appear quite otherwise, as it did here.

II. The vision by which this distinction of the captives was represented to the prophet's mind; He saw *two baskets of figs set before the temple*, there ready to be offered as first-fruits to the honour of God. Perhaps the priests, being remiss in their duty, were not ready to receive them, and dispose of them, according to the law, and therefore Jeremiah sees them standing *before the temple*. But that which was the significance of the vision, was, that the figs in one basket were extraordinarily good, those in the other basket extremely bad. The children of men are all as the *fruits of the fig-tree*, capable of being made serviceable to God and man; (Judg. ix. 11.) but some are as *good figs*, than which nothing is more pleasant, others as *damaged, rotten figs*, than which nothing is more nauseous. What creature viler than a wicked man, and what more valuable than a godly man? The *good figs* were like those that are *first ripe*, which are most acceptable,

(Mic. vii. 1.) and most prized, when newly come into season. The bad *figs* are such as could *not be eaten, they were so evil*; they could not answer the end of their creation, were neither pleasant, nor *good for food*; and what then were they good for? If God has no honour from men, nor their generation any service, they are even like the *bad figs*, that *cannot be eaten*, that will not answer any good purpose; *if the salt have lost its savour, it is thenceforth fit for nothing but the dunghill*. Of the persons that are presented to the Lord at the door of his *tabernacle*, some are sincere, and they are *very good*; others dissemble with God, and they are *very bad*; sinners are the worst of men, hypocrites the worst of sinners. *Corruptio optimi est pessima—That which is best becomes, when corrupted, the worst*.

III. The exposition and application of this vision. God intended by it to raise the dejected spirits of those that were gone into captivity, by assuring them of a happy return, and to humble and awaken the proud and secure spirits of those who continued yet in Jerusalem, by assuring them of a miserable captivity.

1. Here is the moral of the *good figs*, that were very good, the first ripe; these represented the pious captives, that seemed first ripe for ruin, for they went first into captivity, but should prove first ripe for mercy, and their captivity should help to ripen them; these are pleasing to God, as *good figs* are to us, and shall be carefully preserved for use. Now observe here,

(1.) Those that were already *carried into captivity*, were the *good figs* that God would own. This shows, [1.] That we cannot determine of God's love or hatred *by all that is before us*. When God's judgments are abroad, *they are not always the worst that are first seized by them*. [2.] That early sufferings sometimes prove for the best to us. The sooner the child is corrected, the better effect the correction is likely to have: those that went first into captivity were as the son whom the *father loves, and chastens betimes*, chastens while there is hope, and it did well; but those that staid behind were like a child long *left to himself*, who, when afterward corrected, is stubborn, and made worse by it, Lam. iii. 27.

(2.) God owns their captivity to be his doing; whoever were the instruments of it, he ordered and directed it; (v. 5.) *I have sent them out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans*. It is God that puts his gold into the furnace, to be tried; his hand is, in an especial manner, to be eyed in the afflictions of good people. The judge orders the malefactor into the hand of an executioner, but the father corrects the child with his own hand.

(3.) Even this disgraceful, uncomfortable captivity, God intended for their benefit; and we are sure that his intentions are never frustrated; *I have sent them into the land of the Chaldeans for their good*. It seemed to be every way for their hurt, not only as it was the ruin of their estates, honours, and liberties, parted them from their relations and friends, and put them under the power of their enemies and oppressors, but as it sunk their spirits, discouraged their faith, deprived them of the benefit of God's oracles and ordinances, and exposed them to temptations; and yet it was designed for their good, and proved so, in the issue, as to many of them. *Out of the eater came forth meat*. By their afflictions they were convinced of sin, humbled under the hand of God, weaned from the world, made serious, taught to pray, and turned from their iniquity, particularly they were cured of their inclination to idolatry; and thus it was *good for them that they were afflicted*, Ps. cxix. 67, 71.

(4.) God promises them that he will own them in their captivity; though they seem abandoned,

they shall be acknowledged; the scornful relations they left behind will scarcely own them, or their kindred to them, but God says, *I will acknowledge them*. Note, The Lord knows them that are his, and will own them in all conditions; nakedness and sword shall not *separate them from his love*.

(5.) God assures them of his protection in their trouble, and a glorious deliverance out of it in due time, v. 6. Being sent into captivity *for their good*, they shall not be lost there; but it shall be with them as it is with gold which the refiner puts into the furnace. [1.] He has his eye upon it while it is there, and it is a careful eye, to see that it sustain no damage; *"I will set mine eyes upon them for good"*, to order every thing for the best, that all the circumstances of the affliction may concur to the answering of the great intention of it. [2.] He will be sure to take it out of the furnace again, as soon as the work designed upon it is done; *I will bring them again to this land*. They were sent abroad for improvement awhile, under a divine discipline: but they shall be fetched back, when they have gone through their trial there, to their Father's house. [3.] He will fashion his gold when he has refined it, will make it a vessel of honour fit for his use; so, when God has brought them back from their trial, *he will build them*, and make them a habitation for himself, will *plant them*, and make them a vineyard for himself. Their captivity was to square the rough stones, and make them fit for his building, to prune up the young trees, and make them fit for his planting.

(6.) He engages to prepare them for these temporal mercies which he designed for them, by bestowing spiritual mercies upon them, v. 7. It is this that will make their captivity *be for their good*; this shall be both the improvement of their affliction, and their qualification for deliverance. When our troubles are sanctified to us, then we may be sure that they will end well. Now that which is promised, is, [1.] That they should be *better acquainted with God*; they shall learn more of God by his providences in Babylon than they had learned by all his oracles and ordinances in Jerusalem; thanks to divine grace, for if that had not wrought mightily upon them in Babylon, they would for ever have forgotten God. It is here promised, *I will give them*, not so much a *heart to know me*, as a *heart to know me*, for the right knowledge of God consists not in notion and speculation, but in the convictions of the practical judgment directing and governing the will and affections. *A good understanding have all they that do his commandments*, Ps. cxi. 10. Where God gives a sincere desire and inclination to know him, he will give that knowledge. It is God himself that gives a heart to know him, else we should perish for ever in our ignorance. [2.] That they should be *entirely converted to God*; to his will as their rule, his service as their business, and his glory as their end; *They shall return to me with their whole heart*. God himself undertakes for them that they shall; and if he *turn us, we shall be turned*. This follows upon the former; for those that have a heart to know God aright, will not only turn to him, but turn with their whole heart; for those that are either obstinate in their rebellion, or hypocritical in their religion, may truly be said to be ignorant of God. [3.] That thus they should be again *taken into covenant with God*, as much to their comfort as ever; *They shall be my people, and I will be their God*. God will own them, as formerly, for his people, in the discoveries of himself to them, in his acceptance of their services, and in his gracious appearances on their behalf, and they shall have liberty to own him for their God, in their prayers to him, and their expectations from him. Note, Those that have back-

hidden from God, if they do in sincerity return to him, are admitted as freely as any to all the privileges and comforts of the everlasting covenant, which is *herein* well ordered, that every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of covenant, and that afflictions are not only consistent with, but flowing from, covenant-love.

2. Here is the moral of the *bad figs*; Zedekiah and his princes and partisans *yet remain in the land*, proud and secure enough, Ezck. xi. 3. Many were fled into Egypt for shelter, and they thought they had shifted well for themselves and their own safety, and boasted that though therein they had gone contrary to the command of God, yet they had acted prudently for themselves. Now as to these that looked so scornfully upon those that were gone into captivity, it is here threatened,

(1.) That, whereas those who were already carried away were settled in one country, where they had the comfort of one another's society, though in captivity, these should be dispersed and *removed into all the kingdoms of the earth*, where they should have no joy one of another.

(2.) That, whereas these were carried away captives for their good, these should be removed into all countries *for their hurt*. Their afflictions should be so far from humbling them, that they should harden them; not bring them nearer to God, but set them at a greater distance from him.

(3.) That, whereas those should have the honour of being owned of God in their troubles, these should have the shame of being abandoned by all mankind; *In all places whither I shall drive them, they shall be a reproach and a proverb*. "Such a one is as false and proud as a Jew;" "Such a one is as poor and miserable as a Jew." All their neighbours shall make a jest of them, and of the calamities brought upon them.

(4.) That, whereas those should *return to their own land*, these shall be *consumed from that land*, never to see it more, and it shall be of no avail to them to plead, that it was the land God gave to their fathers, for they had it from God, and he gave it them upon condition of their obedience.

(5.) That, whereas those were reserved for *better times*, these were reserved for *worse*; wherever they are removed, *the sword, and famine, and pestilence*, shall be sent after them, shall soon overtake them, and, coming with commission so to do, shall overcome them. God has variety of judgments wherewith to prosecute those that fly from justice; and those that have escaped one, may expect another, till they are brought to repent and reform.

Doubtless, this prophecy had its accomplishment in the men of that generation: yea, because we read not of any such remarkable difference between those of Jeconiah's captivity and those of Zedekiah's, it is probable that this was a typical reference to the last destruction of the Jews by the Romans, in which those of them that believed were taken care of; but those that continued obstinate in unbelief, were driven into all countries *for a taunt and a curse*, and so they remain to this day.

CHAP. XXV.

The prophecy of this chapter bears date some time before those prophecies in the chapters next foregoing, for they are not placed in the exact order of time in which they were delivered. This is dated in the first year of Nebuchadrezzar, that remarkable year when the sword of the Lord began to be drawn and furbished. Here is, I. A review of the prophecies that had been delivered to Judah and Jerusalem for many years past, by Jeremiah himself and other prophets, with the little regard given to them, and the little success of them, v. 1. . 7. II. A very express threatening of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, by the king of Babylon, for their contempt of God and their continuance in sin, v. 8. . 11. To which is annexed a promise of their deliverance out of their

captivity in Babylon, after 70 years, v. 12. . 14. III. A prediction of the devastation of divers other nations about, by Nebuchadrezzar, represented by a *cup of fury* put into their hands, (v. 15. . 28.) by a sword sent among them, (v. 29. . 33.) and a desolation made among the shepherds, and their flocks and pastures; (v. 34. . 38.) so that we have here *judgment beginning at the house of God*, but not ending there.

1. **T**HE word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that *was* the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; 2. The which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, 3. From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, (that is the three and twentieth year,) the word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. 4. And the Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear. 5. They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever: 6. And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt. 7. Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the Lord; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt.

We have here a message from God concerning all the people of Judah, (v. 1.) which Jeremiah delivered, in his name, unto all the people of Judah, v. 2. Note, That which is of universal concern, ought to be of universal cognizance. It is fit that the word which concerns all the people, as the word of God does, the word of the gospel particularly, should be divulged to all in general, and as far as may be, addressed to each in particular. Jeremiah had been sent to the *house of the king*, (ch. xxii. 1.) and he took courage to deliver his message there; here he is sent to all the *people*, and he takes the pains to deliver his message to them, probably when they were all come up to Jerusalem, to worship at some of the solemn feasts; then he had them together, and it was to be hoped then, if ever, they would be well disposed to *hear counsel and receive instruction*.

This prophecy is dated in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, and the 1st of Nebuchadrezzar. It was in the latter end of Jehoiakim's 3d year, that Nebuchadrezzar began to reign himself alone, (having reigned some time before in conjunction with his father,) as appears, Dan. i. 1. but Jehoiakim's 4th year was begun before Nebuchadrezzar's 1st was completed. Now that that active, daring, martial prince began to set up for the world's master, God, by his prophet, gives notice that he is *his servant*, and intimates what work he intends to employ him in, that his growing greatness, which was so formidable to the nations, might not be construed as any reflection upon the power and providence of God in the go-

vernment of the world. Nebuchadrezzar should not bid so fair for universal monarchy, (I should have said universal tyranny,) but that God had purposes of his own to serve by him; in the execution of which, the world shall see the meaning of God's permitting and ordering a thing that seemed such a reflection on his sovereignty and goodness.

Now in this message we may observe the great pains that had been taken with the people to bring them to repentance, which they are here put in mind of, as an aggravation of their sin, and a justification of God in his proceedings against them.

1. Jeremiah, for his part, had been a constant preacher among them 23 years; he began in the 13th year of Josiah, who reigned 31 years, so that he prophesied about 18 or 19 years in his reign, then in the reign of Jehoaiah, and now 4 years of Jehoiakim's reign. Note, God keeps an account, whether we do or no, how long we have enjoyed the means of grace; and the longer we have enjoyed them, the heavier will our account be if we have not improved them. *These three years* (these three and twenty years) *have I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree.* All this while, (1.) God had been constant in sending messages to them, as there was occasion for them; "From that time to this very day, the word of the Lord has come unto me, for your use." Though they had the substance of the warning sent them already in the books of Moses, yet, because those were not duly regarded and applied, God sent to enforce them, and make them more particular, that they might be without excuse. Thus God's Spirit was striving with them, as with the old world, Gen. vi. 3. (2.) Jeremiah had been faithful and industrious in delivering those messages; he could appeal to themselves, as well as to God and his own conscience, concerning this; *I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking.* He had declared to them the whole counsel of God; he had taken a great deal of care and pains to discharge his trust in such a manner as might be most likely to win and work upon them. What men are solicitous about and intent upon, they rise up early to prosecute. It intimates that his head was so full of thoughts about it, and his heart so intent upon doing good, that it broke his sleep, and made him get up betimes to project which way he might take, that would be most likely to do them good. He rose early, both because he would lose no time, and because he would lay hold on and improve the best time to work upon them, when, if ever, they were sober and sedate. Christ came *early in the morning* to preach in the temple, and the people as early to hear him, Luke xxi. 38. Morning-lectures have their advantages. *My voice shalt thou hear in the morning.*

2. Beside him, God had sent them other prophets, on the same errand, v. 4. Of the *writing* prophets, Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk, were a little before him, and Zephaniah cotemporary with him. But, beside those, there were many other of God's *servants the prophets*, who preached awakening sermons, which were never published. And here God himself is said to *rise early and send them*; intimating how much his heart also was upon it, that this people should *turn and live*, and not *go on and die*, Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

3. All the messages sent them were to the purpose, and much to the same purpose, v. 5, 6. (1.) They all told them of their faults, *their evil way*, and the *evil of their doings*. Those were not of God's sending, who flattered them as if there were nothing amiss among them. (2.) They all reproved them particularly for their idolatry, as a sin that was in a special manner provoking to God; their *going after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them*, gods that were the *work of their own*

hands. (3.) They all called on them to repent of their sins, and to reform their lives. This was the burthen of every song. *Turn ye now every one from his evil way.* Note, Personal and particular reformation must be insisted on as necessary to a national deliverance: *every one must turn from his own evil way.* The street will not be clean unless every one sweep before his own door. (4.) They all assured them, that, if they did so, it would certainly be the *lengthening out of their tranquillity.* The mercies they enjoyed should be continued to them; "*You shall dwell in the land, dwell at ease, dwell in peace, in this good land, which the Lord has given you and your fathers.* Nothing but sin will turn you out of it, and that shall not if you turn from it." The judgments they feared should be prevented; *Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt.* Note, We should never receive from God the evil of punishment if we did not provoke him by the evil of sin. God deals fairly with us, never corrects his children without cause, nor causes grief to us unless we give offence to him.

4. Yet all was to no purpose. They were not wrought upon to take the right and only method to turn away the wrath of God. Jeremiah was a lively, affectionate preacher, yet they *hearkened not* to him, v. 3. The other prophets dealt faithfully with them, but neither did they *hearken to them*, nor *incline their ear*, v. 4. That very particular sin which they were told, of all others, was most offensive to God, and made them obnoxious to his justice, they wilfully persisted in; *You provoke me with the works of your hands, to your own hurt.* Note, What is a provocation to God will prove, in the end, hurt to ourselves, and we must bear the blame of it. *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.*

5. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Because ye have not heard my words, 9. Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolations. 10. Moreover, I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle. 11. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. 13. And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations. 14. For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also: and I will recompense them accord-

ing to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands.

Here is the sentence grounded upon the foregoing charge. "*Because ye have not heard my words, I must take another course with you,*" v. 8. Note, When men will not regard the judgments of God's mouth, they may expect to feel the judgments of his hands; to hear the rod, since they would not hear the word; for the sinner must either be parted from his sin, or perish in it. Wrath comes *without remedy* against those only that sin *without repentance*. It is not so much men's turning aside that ruins them as their not returning.

1. The ruin of the land of Judah by the king of Babylon's armies is here decreed, v. 9. God sent them *his servants the prophets*, and they were not heeded, and therefore God will send for *his servant the king of Babylon*, whom they cannot mock, and despise, and persecute, as they did his servants the prophets. Note, The messengers of God's wrath will be sent against those that would not receive the messengers of his mercy. One way or other, God will be heeded, and will make men know that *he is the Lord*. Nebuchadrezzar, though a stranger to the true God, the God of Israel, nay, an enemy to him, and afterward a rival with him, was yet, in the descent he made upon this country, *God's servant*, accomplished his purpose, was employed by him, and was an instrument in his hand for the correction of his people. He was really serving God's designs when he thought he was serving his own ends. Justly therefore does God here call himself, *The Lord of hosts*, (v. 8.) for here is an instance of his sovereign dominion, not only over the *inhabitants*, but over the *armies, of this earth*, of which he makes what use he pleases. He has them all at his command; the most potent and absolute monarchs are his servants. Nebuchadrezzar, who is an instrument of his wrath, is as truly his servant, as Cyrus is an instrument of his mercy. The land of Judah being to be made desolate, God here musters his army that is to do it, gathers it together, takes *all the families of the north*, if there be occasion for them, leads them on as their Commander in chief, *brings them against this land*, gives them success, not only against Judah and Jerusalem, but against *all the nations round about*, that there might be no dependence upon them as allies, or assistants against that threatening force. The utter destruction of this and all the neighbouring lands is here described, v. 9.—11. It shall be total; *The whole land shall be a desolation*; not only desolate, but a desolation itself, both city and country shall be laid waste, and all the wealth of both be made a prey of; it shall be lasting, even *perpetual desolations*; they shall continue so long in ruins, and after long waiting there shall appear so little prospect of relief, that every one shall call it *perpetual*. This desolation shall be the ruin of their credit among their neighbours; it shall bury their honour in the dust, shall make them *an astonishment and an hissing*; every one will be amazed at them, and hiss them off the stage of action with just disgrace, for deserting God who would have been their protection, for impostors who would certainly be their destruction. It will likewise be the ruin of all their comfort among themselves; it shall be a final period of all their joy; *I will take from them the voice of mirth*, hang their harps on the willow trees, and put them out of tune for songs. *I will take from them the voice of mirth*; they shall neither have cause for it, nor hearts for it. They would not hear the voice of God's word, and therefore the *voice of mirth* shall no more be heard among them. They shall be deprived of food; *the sound of the millstones shall not be heard*, for when the enemy has seized

their stores, *the sound of the grinding* must needs be low, Eccl. xii. 4. An end shall be put to all business, there shall not be seen *the light of a candle*, for there shall be no work to be done worth candle-light. And, *lastly*, they shall be deprived of their liberty; *Those nations shall serve the king of Babylon 70 years*. The fixing of the time during which the captivity should last, would be of great use, not only for the confirmation of the prophecy, when the event (which in this particular could by no human sagacity be foreseen) should exactly answer the prediction, but for the comfort of the people of God in their calamity, and the encouragement of faith and prayer. Daniel, who was himself a prophet, had an eye to it, Dan. ix. 2. Nay, God himself had an eye to it, (2 Chron. xxxvi. 22.) for *therefore he stirred up the spirit of Cyrus*, that the word spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished. *Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world*; which appears by this, that, when he has thought fit, some of them have been made known to his servants the prophets, and by them to his church.

2. The ruin of Babylon, at last, is here likewise foretold, as it had been, long before, by Isaiah, v. 12.—14. The destroyers must themselves be destroyed, and the rod thrown into the fire, when the correcting-work is done with it. This shall be done when *70 years are accomplished*, for the destruction of Babylon must make way for the deliverance of the captives. It is a great doubt when these *70 years* commence; some date them from the captivity in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, and 1st of Nebuchadrezzar; others from the captivity of Jehoiachin eight years after. I rather incline to the former, because then these nations began to *serve the king of Babylon*, and because usually God has taken the earliest time from which to reckon the accomplishment of a promise of mercy, as will appear in computing the 400 years' servitude in Egypt. And if so, 18 or 19 years of the 70 were run out before Jerusalem and the temple were quite destroyed in the 11th year of Zedekiah. However that be, when the time, the set time, to favour Zion is come, the king of Babylon must be visited, and all the instances of his tyranny reckoned for; then that nation shall be punished for *their iniquity*, as the other nations have been punished for theirs. That land must then be a *perpetual desolation*, such as they had made other lands; for *the Judge of all the earth* will both *do right*, and *avenge wrong*, as King of nations, and King of saints. Let proud conquerors and oppressors be moderate in the use of their power and success, for it will come at last to their own turn to suffer; their day will come to fall. In this destruction of Babylon, which was to be brought about by the Medes and Persians, reference shall be had, (1.) To what God had said; *I will bring upon that land all my words*; for all the wealth and honour of Babylon shall be sacrificed to the truth of the divine predictions, and all its power broken, rather than one iota or tittle of God's word shall fall to the ground. The same Jeremiah that prophesied the destruction of other nations by the Chaldeans, foretold also the destruction of the Chaldeans themselves; and this must be brought upon them, v. 13. It is with reference to this very event, that God says, *I will confirm the word of my servant, and perform the counsel of my messengers*, Isa. xlv. 26. (2.) To what they had done; (v. 14.) *I will recompense them according to their deeds*, by which they transgressed the law of God, even then when they were made to serve his purposes. They had made many nations to *serve them*, and trampled upon them with the greatest insolence imaginable: but now that the measure of their iniquity is full, *many nations and great kings*, that are in alliance with,

and come in to the assistance of, Cyrus king of Persia, shall *serve themselves of them* also, shall make themselves masters of their country, enrich themselves with their spoils, and make them the footstool by which to mount the throne of universal monarchy. They shall make use of them for servants and soldiers. *He that leads into captivity, shall go into captivity.*

15. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me, Take the wine-cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations to whom I send thee, to drink it. 16. And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them. 17. Then took I the cup at the Lord's hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the Lord had sent me: 18. *To wit*, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, a hissing, and a curse; (as it is this day;) 19. Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people; 20. And all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod. 21. Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon, 22. And all the kings of Tyrus, and all the kings of Zidon, and the kings of the isles which are beyond the sea, 23. Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all *that are* in the utmost corners, 24. And all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the desert, 25. And all the kings of Zimri, and all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes, 26. And all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which *are* upon the face of the earth: and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them. 27. Therefore thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Drink ye, and be drunken, and spue, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you. 28. And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thy hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Ye shall certainly drink. 29. For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the Lord of hosts.

Under the similitude of a cup going round, which all the company must drink of, is here represented the universal desolation that was now coming upon that part of the world, which Nebuchadnezzar, who just now began to reign and act, was to be the in-

strument of, and which should at length recoil upon his own country. The *cup* in the vision is to be a *sword* in the accomplishment of it: so it is explained, *v.* 16. *It is the sword that I will send among them*, the sword of war, that should be irresistibly strong and implacably cruel. Observe,

1. Whence this destroying sword should come; *from the hand of God*, it is the *sword of the Lord*, (*ch.* xlvii. 6.) *bathed in heaven*, Isa. xxxiv. 5. Wicked men are made use of as his sword, Ps. xvii. 13. It is the *wine-cup of his fury*. It is the just anger of God that sends this judgment; the nations have provoked him by their sins, and they must fall under the tokens of his wrath. These are compared to some intoxicating liquor, which they shall be forced to drink of, as formerly condemned malefactors were sometimes executed by being compelled to drink poison. The wicked are said to *drink the wrath of the Almighty*, Job xxi. 20. Rev. xiv. 10. Their share of troubles in this world is represented by the dregs of a cup of red wine full of mixture, Ps. lxxv. 8. See Ps. xi. 6. The wrath of God in this world is but as a *cup*, in comparison of the full streams of it in the other world.

2. By whose hand it should be sent them; by the hand of Jeremiah, as the judge *set over the nations*, (*ch.* i. 10.) to pass this sentence upon them; and by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, as the executioner. What a much greater figure then does the poor prophet make, than what the potent prince makes, if we look upon their relation to God, though in the eye of the world it was the reverse of it! Jeremiah must *take the cup at God's hand*, and compel the nations *to drink it*. He foretells no hurt to them, but what God appoints him to tell; and what is foretold by a divine authority, will certainly be fulfilled by a divine power.

3. On whom it should be sent; on all the nations within the verge of Israel's acquaintance, and the lines of their communication. Jeremiah took the cup, and *made all nations to drink of it*, that is, he prophesied concerning each of the nations here mentioned, that they should share in this great desolation that was coming. *Jerusalem and the cities of Judah* are put first; (*v.* 18.) *for judgment begins at the house of God*, (1 Pet. iv. 17.) at the sanctuary, Ezek. ix. 6. Whether Nebuchadnezzar had his eye principally upon Jerusalem and Judah in this expedition or no, does not appear; probably he had; for it was as considerable as any of the nations here mentioned; however, God had his eye principally to them. And this part of the prophecy was already begun to be accomplished; this is denoted by that melancholy parenthesis, (*as it is this day*,) for in the 4th year of Jehoiakim things were come into a very bad posture, and all the foundations were out of course. *Pharaoh, king of Egypt*, comes next, because the Jews trusted to that broken reed; (*v.* 19.) the remains of them fled to Egypt, and then Jeremiah particularly foretold the destruction of that country, *ch.* xliii. 10, 11. All the other nations that bordered upon Canaan, must pledge Jerusalem in this bitter cup, this cup of trembling. The *mingled people*, the Arabians, so some; some rovers of divers nations that lived by rapine, so others; *the kings of the land of Uz*, joined to the country of the Edomites. The Philistines had been vexatious to Israel, but now their cities and their lords became a prey to this mighty conqueror. Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Zidon, are places well known to border upon Israel; the *Isles beyond*, or *beside*, the sea, are supposed to be those parts of Phœnicia and Syria, that lay upon the coast of the Mediterranean sea. Dedan, and the other countries mentioned, (*v.* 23, 24.) seem to have lain upon the confines of Idumœa and Arabia the desert. These of Elam are the Persians, with whom the Medes

are joined, now looked upon as inconsiderable, and yet afterward able to make reprisals upon Babylon for themselves and all their neighbours. The *kings of the north*, that lay nearer to Babylon, and others that lay up at some distance, will be sure to be seized on, and made a prey of, by the victorious sword of Nebuchadrezzar. Nay, he shall push on his victories with such incredible fury and success, that all the kingdoms of the world that were then and there known, should become sacrifices to his ambition. Thus Alexander is said to have conquered *the world*, and the Roman empire is called *the world*, Luke ii. 1. Or it may be taken as reading the doom of *all the kingdoms* of the earth; one time or other they shall feel the dreadful effects of war. The world has been, and will be, a great cock-pit, while men's lusts war as they do in *their members*, Jam. iv. 1. But that the conquerors may see their fate with the conquered, it concludes, *The king of Sheshach shall drink after them*, that is, the king of Babylon himself, who has given his neighbours all this trouble and vexation, shall at length have it return upon his own head. That by Sheshach is meant Babylon, is plain, from *ch. li. 41.* but whether it was another name of the same city, or the name of another city of the same kingdom, is uncertain. Babylon's ruin was foretold, *v. 12, 13.* Upon this prophecy of its being the author of the ruin of so many nations, it was very fitly repeated here again.

4. What should be the effect of it. The desolations which the sword should make in all these kingdoms, are represented by the consequences of excessive drinking; (*v. 16.*) *They shall drink and be moved, and be mad. They shall be drunken and shue, and fall and rise no more, v. 27.* Now this may serve, (1.) To make us loathe the sin of drunkenness, that the consequences of it are made use of to set forth a most woful and miserable condition. Drunkenness deprives men, for the present, of the use of their reason, makes them mad. It takes from them likewise that which, next to reason, is the most valuable blessing, and that is health; it makes them sick, and endangers the bones and the life. Men in drink often *fall, and rise no more*; it is a sin that is its own punishment. How wretchedly are they intoxicated and besotted, that suffer themselves at any time to be intoxicated, especially to be, by the frequent commission of this sin, besotted with wine or strong drink! (2.) To make us dread the judgments of war. When God sends the sword upon a nation, with warrant to make it desolate, it soon becomes like a drunken man, filled with confusion at the alarms of war, put into a hurry; its counsellors *mad*, and at their wit's end, staggering in all the measures they take, all the motions they make; sick at heart with continual vexation; *vomiting up the riches* they have greedily *swallowed down*; (*Job xx. 15.*) *falling down* before the enemy, and as unable to get up again, or do any thing to help themselves, as a man *dead drunk is*, Hab. ii. 16.

5. The undoubted certainty of it, with the reason given for it, *v. 28, 29.* They will *refuse to take the cup at thy hand*; not only they will be loath that the judgment should come, but they will be loath to believe that ever it will come; they will not give credit to the prediction of so despicable a man as Jeremiah; but he must tell them that it is *the word of the Lord of hosts*, he hath said it; and it is in vain for them to struggle with Omnipotence; *Ye shall certainly drink.* The prophet must give them this reason, It is a time of visitation, it is a reckoning day, and Jerusalem has been called to an account already; *I begin to bring evil on the city that is called by my name*; its relation to me will not exempt it from punishment, and *should ye be utterly unpunished?* No, *If this be done in the green tree,*

what will be done in the dry? If they who have some good in them, smart so severely for the evil that is found in them, can they expect to escape, who have worse evils, and no good, found among them? If Jerusalem be punished for learning idolatry of the nations, shall not the nations be punished of whom they learned it? No doubt they shall; *I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth*, for they have helped to debauch the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Upon this whole matter we may observe, (1.) That there is a God that judges in the earth, to whom all the nations of the earth are accountable, and by whose judgment they must abide. (2.) That God can easily bring to ruin the greatest nations, the most numerous and powerful, and such as have been most secure. (3.) That those who have been vexatious and mischievous to the people of God, will be reckoned with for it at last. Many of these nations had in their turns given disturbance to Israel, but now comes destruction on them. The year of the Redeemer will come, even the *year of recompenses* for the controversy of Zion. (4.) That the *burthen of the word of the Lord* will at last become the burthen of his judgments. Isaiah had prophesied long since against most of these nations, (*ch. xiii. &c.*) and now at length all his prophecies will have their complete fulfilling. (5.) That those who are ambitious of power and dominion, commonly become the troublers of the earth and the plagues of their generation; Nebuchadrezzar was so proud of his might, that he had no sense of right. These are the men that turned the world upside down, and yet expect to be admired and adored. Alexander thought himself a great prince, when others thought him no better than a great pirate. (6.) That the greatest pomp and power of this world are of very uncertain continuance. Before Nebuchadrezzar's greater force kings themselves must yield, and become captives.

30. Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread *the grapes*, against all the inhabitants of the earth. 31. A noise shall come *even* to the ends of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations; he will plead with all flesh: he will give them *that are wicked* to the sword, saith the LORD. 32. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. 33. And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from *one end* of the earth even unto the *other end* of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground. 34. Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves *in the ashes*, ye principal of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel. 35. And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape. 36. A voice of the cry

of the shepherds, and a howling of the principal of the flock, *shall be heard*: for the LORD hath spoiled their pasture. 37. And the peaceable habitations are cut down, because of the fierce anger of the LORD. 38. He hath forsaken his covert, as the lion: for their land is desolate, because of the fierceness of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger.

We have in these verses, a further description of those terrible desolations which the king of Babylon with his armies should make in all the countries and nations round about Jerusalem. In Jerusalem God had erected his temple; there were his oracles and ordinances which the neighbouring nations should have attended to, and might have received benefit by; thither they should have applied themselves for the knowledge of God and their duty, and then they might have had reason to bless God for their neighbourhood to Jerusalem; but they, instead of that, taking all opportunities either to debauch or to disturb that holy city, when God came to reckon with Jerusalem, (because it learned so much of the *way of the nations*,) he reckoned with the nations because they learned so little of the way of Jerusalem.

They will soon be aware of Nebuchadnezzar's making war upon them; but the prophet is here bidden to tell them that it is God himself that makes war upon them, a God with whom there is no contending.

1. The war is here proclaimed; (v. 30.) *The Lord shall roar from on high*; not from mount Zion and Jerusalem, (as Joel iii. 16. Amos i. 2.) but from heaven, from his holy habitation there; for now Jerusalem is one of the places against which he roars; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation on earth from that above. He has been long silent, and seemed not to take notice of the wickedness of the nations; the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now he shall give a shout, as the assailants in battle do, against all the inhabitants of the earth, to whom it shall be a shout of terror, and yet a shout of joy in heaven, as theirs that tread the grapes; for when God is reckoning with the proud enemies of his kingdom among men, there is a great voice of much people heard in heaven, saying, *Hallelujah*, Rev. xix. 1. He roars as a lion, (Amos iii. 4, 8.) as a lion that has forsaken his covert, (v. 38.) and is going abroad to seek his prey, upon which he roars, that he may the more easily seize it.

2. The manifesto is here published, showing the causes and reasons why God proclaims this war; (v. 31.) *The Lord has a controversy with the nations*; he has just cause to contend with them, and he will take this way of pleading with them. His quarrel with them is, in one word, for their wickedness, their contempt of him, and his authority over them, and kindness to them; *He will give them that are wicked to the sword*. They have provoked God to anger, and thence comes all this destruction; it is because of the fierce anger of the Lord, (v. 37.) and again (v. 38.) the fierceness of the oppressor; or, as it might be better read, the fierceness of the oppressing sword (for the word is feminine) is because of his fierce anger; and we are sure that he is never angry without cause; but *who knows the power of his anger?*

3. The alarm is here given and taken; *A noise will come even to the ends of the earth*, so loud shall it roar, so far shall it reach, v. 31. The alarm is not given by sound of trumpet, or beat of drum, but by a whirlwind, a great whirlwind, storm or tempest, which shall be raised up from the coasts, the

remote coasts of the earth, v. 32. The Chaldean army shall be like a hurricane raised in the north, but thence carried on with incredible fierceness and swiftness, bearing down all before it. It is like the whirlwind out of which God answered Job, which was exceeding terrible, Job xxxvii. 1.—xxxviii. 1. And when the wrath of God thus roars like a lion from heaven, no marvel if it be echoed with shrieks from earth; for who can choose but tremble when God thus speaks in displeasure? See Hosea xi. 10. Now the shepherds shall howl and cry, the kings and princes, and great ones of the earth, the principal of the flock; they used to be the most courageous and secure, but now their hearts shall fail them, they shall wallow themselves in the ashes, v. 34. Seeing themselves utterly unable to make head against the enemy, and seeing their country, which they have the charge of, and a concern for, inevitably ruined, they shall abandon themselves to sorrow. There shall be a voice of the cry of the shepherds, and a howling of the principal of the flock shall be heard, v. 36. Those are great calamities indeed, that strike such a terror upon the great men, and put them into this consternation; *The Lord hath spoiled their pasture*, in which they fed their flocks, and out of which they fed themselves; the spoiling of that makes them cry out thus. Perhaps, carrying on the metaphor of a lion roaring, it alludes to the great fright that shepherds are in when they hear a roaring lion coming toward their flocks, and find they have no way to flee (v. 35.) for their own safety, neither can the principal of the flock escape. The enemy will be so numerous, so furious, so sedulous, and the extent of their armies so vast, that it will be impossible to avoid falling into their hands. Note, As we cannot outface, so we cannot outrun, the judgments of God. This is that for which the shepherds howl and cry.

4. The progress of this war is here described; (v. 32.) *Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation*; as the cup goes round, every nation shall have its share, and take its turn, because one does not take warning by the calamities of another to repent and reform. Nay, as if this were to be a little representation of the last and general judgment, it shall reach from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth, v. 33. The day of vengeance is in his heart, and now his hand shall find out all his enemies wherever they are, Ps. cxi. 8. Note, When our neighbour's house is on fire, it is time to be concerned for our own. When one nation is a seat of war, every neighbouring nation should hear, and fear, and make its peace with God.

5. The dismal consequences of this war are here foretold; *The days of slaughter and dispersions are accomplished*, they are fully come, (v. 34.) the time fixed in the divine counsel for the slaughter of some and the dispersion of the rest, which will make the nations completely desolate. Multitudes shall fall by the sword of the merciless Chaldeans, so that the slain of the Lord shall be every where found; they are slain by commission from him, and are sacrificed to his justice. The slain for sin are the slain of the Lord. To complete the misery of their slaughter, they shall not be lamented in particular, so general shall the matter of lamentation be. Nay, they shall not be gathered up, nor buried, for they shall have no friends left to do it, and the enemies shall not have so much humanity in them as to do it; and then they shall be as dung upon the earth, so vile and noisome: and it is well if, as dung manures the earth, and makes it fruitful, so these horrid spectacles, which lie as monuments of divine justice, might be a means to awaken the inhabitants of the earth to learn righteousness. The effect of this war will be the desolation of the whole land that is the seat of it, (v. 38.) one land after another. But here are two

expressions more, that seem to make the case in a particular manner piteous, (1.) *Ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel*, v. 34. The most desirable persons among them who most valued themselves, and were most valued, shall fall by the sword; who were looked upon as *vessels of honour*. Ye shall fall as a Venice glass or a China dish, which is soon broken all to pieces: even the tender and delicate shall share in the common calamity; the sword devours one as well as another. (2.) *Even the peaceable habitations are cut down*. Those that used to be quiet, and not molested, the habitations in which ye have long dwelt in peace, shall now be no longer such, but *cut down* by the war; or, Those who used to be quiet, and not molesting any of their neighbours, those who lived in peace, easily, and gave no provocation to any, even those shall not escape. This is one of the direful effects of war, that even those who were most harmless and inoffensive suffer hard things. Blessed be God, there is a *peaceable habitation* above for all the sons of peace, which is out of the reach of fire and sword.

CHAP. XXVI.

As in the history of the *Acts of the Apostles*, that of their preaching and that of their suffering are interwoven, so it is in the account we have of the prophet Jeremiah; witness this chapter, where we are told, I. How faithfully he preached, v. 1. . 6. II. How spitefully he was persecuted for so doing by the priests and the prophets, v. 7. . 11. III. How bravely he stood to his doctrine, in the face of his persecutors, v. 12. . 15. IV. How wonderfully he was protected and delivered by the prudence of the princes and elders, v. 16. . 19. Though Urijah, another prophet, was about the same time put to death by Jehoiakim, (v. 20. . 23.) yet Jeremiah met with those that sheltered him, v. 24.

I. **IN** the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah king of Judah, came this word from the LORD, saying. 2. Thus saith the LORD, Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them: diminish not a word: 3. If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings. 4. And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD, If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law which I have set before you, 5. To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them, but ye have not hearkened; 6. Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.

We have here the sermon that Jeremiah preached, which gave such offence, that he was in danger of losing his life for it. It is here left upon record, as it were, by way of appeal to the judgment of impartial men in all ages, whether Jeremiah was worthy to die for delivering such a message as this from God, and whether his persecutors were not very wicked and unreasonable men.

I. God directed him where to preach this sermon, and when, and to what auditory, v. 2. Let not any censure Jeremiah as indiscreet in the choice of place and time, nor say that he might have delivered his

message more privately, in a corner, among his friends that he could confide in, and that he deserved to smart for not acting more cautiously; for God gave him orders to preach *in the court of the Lord's house*, which was within the peculiar jurisdiction of his sworn enemies the priests, and who would therefore take themselves to be in a particular manner affronted. He must preach this, as it should seem, at the time of one of the most solemn festivals, when persons were come from all the cities of Judah to worship in the Lord's house. These worshippers, we may suppose, had a great veneration for their priests, would credit the character they gave of men, and be exasperated against those whom they defamed, and would, consequently, side with them and strengthen their hands against Jeremiah: but none of these things must move him or daunt him; in the face of all this danger, he must preach this sermon, which, if it were not convincing, would be very provoking. And because the prophet might be in some temptation to palliate the matter, and make it better to his hearers than God had made it to him, to exchange an offensive expression for one more plausible, therefore God charges him particularly *not to diminish a word*, but to speak all the things, nay, and *all the words*, that he had commanded him. Note, God's ambassadors must keep close to their instructions, and net in the least vary from them, either to please men, or to save themselves from harm. They must neither *add* nor *diminish*, Deut. iv. 2.

II. God directed him what to preach, and it is that which could not give offence to any but such as were resolved to go on still in their trespasses.

1. He must assure them that if they would *repent of their sins*, and turn from them, though they were in imminent danger of ruin, and desolating judgments were just at the door, yet a step should be put to them, and God would proceed no further in his controversy with them; (v. 3.) this was the main thing God intended in sending him to them, to try if they would return from their sins, that so God might turn from his anger, and turn away the judgments that threatened them; which he was not only willing, but very desirous, to do, as soon as he could do it without prejudice to the honour of his justice and holiness. See how God *waits to be gracious*, waits till we are duly qualified, till we are fit for him to be gracious to, and in the mean time tries a variety of methods to bring us to be so.

2. He must, on the other hand, assure them that if they continued obstinate to all the calls God gave them, and would persist in their disobedience, it would certainly end in the ruin of their city and temple, v. 4.—6. (1.) That which God required of them, was, that they should be observant of what he had said to them, both by the written word and by his ministers: that they should *walk in all his law which he set before them*, the law of Moses, and the ordinances and commandments of it; and that they should *hearken to the words of his servants the prophets*, who pressed nothing upon them but what was agreeable to the law of Moses, which was *set before them* as a touchstone to try the spirits by; and by this they were distinguished from the false prophets, who drew them from the law, instead of drawing them to it. The law was what God himself *set before them*. The prophets were *his own servants*, and were immediately sent by him to them, and sent with a great deal of care and concern, *rising early to send them*, lest they should come too late, when their prejudices had got possession, and were become invincible. They had hitherto been deaf both to the law and to the prophets; *Ye have not hearkened*; all he expects now, is, that at length they should heed what he said,

and make his word their rule. A reasonable demand! (2.) That which is threatened in case of refusal, is, that this city, and the temple in it, shall fare as their predecessors did, Shiloh and the tabernacle there, for a like refusal to walk in God's law and hearken to his prophets, then when the present dispensation of prophecy just began in Samuel. Now could a sentence be expressed more unexceptionably? Is it not a rule of justice, *Parium far sit ratio—Let those whose cases are the same, be dealt with alike?* If Jerusalem be like Shiloh in respect of sin, why should it not be like Shiloh in respect of punishment? Can any other be expected? This was not the first time he had given them warning to this effect; see *ch. vii. 12.—14.* When the temple, which was the glory of Jerusalem, was destroyed, the city was thereby *made a curse*; for the temple was that which made it a blessing. *If the salt lose that savour, it is thenceforth good for nothing.* It shall be a curse, it shall be the pattern of a curse; if a man would curse any city, he would say, *God make it like Jerusalem!* Note, Those that will not be subject to the *commands* of God, make themselves subject to the *curse* of God.

7. So the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD. 8. Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded *him* to speak unto all the people, that the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. 9. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD. 10. When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the LORD, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the LORD's house. 11. Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes, and to all the people, saying, This man *is* worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears. 12. Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes, and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house, and against this city, all the words that ye have heard. 13. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. 14. As for me, behold, I *am* in your hand; do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you: 15. But know ye for certain, that, if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the LORD hath sent me unto you, to speak all these words in your ears.

One would have hoped that such a sermon as that in the foregoing verses, so plain and practical, so rational and pathetic, and delivered in God's name, should have wrought upon even this people, especially meeting them now at their devotions, and should have prevailed with them to repent and reform; but instead of awakening their convictions, it did but exasperate their corruptions, as appears by this account of the effect of it.

I. Jeremiah is charged with it as a crime, that he had preached such a sermon, and is apprehended for it as a criminal. The *priests and false prophets*, and *people*, heard him *speak these words*, *v. 7.* They had patience, it seems, to hear him out, did not disturb him when he was preaching, nor give him any interruption till he had *made an end of speaking all that the Lord commanded him to speak*: so far they were fairer with him than some of the persecutors of God's ministers have been; they let him say all he had to say, and yet perhaps with a bad design, in hopes to have something worse yet to lay to his charge; but, having no worse, this shall suffice to ground an indictment upon; He hath said, *This house shall be like Shiloh.* See how unfair they are in representing his words. He had said, in God's name, *If ye will not hearken to me, then will I make this house like Shiloh*; but they leave out God's hand in the desolation, (*I will make it so*), and their own hand in it, in not hearkening to the voice of God, and charge it upon him, that he *blasphemed this holy place*; the crime charged both on our Lord Jesus and on Stephen; He said, *This house shall be like Shiloh.* Well might he complain, as David does, (Ps. lvi. 5.) *Every day they wrest my words*; and we must not think it strange if we, and what we say and do, be thus misrepresented. When the accusation was so weakly grounded, no marvel that the sentence passed upon it was unjust, *Thou shalt surely die.* What he had said agreed with what God had said when he took possession of the temple, (1 Kings ix. 6.—8.) *If you shall at all turn from following after me, then this house shall be abandoned*; and yet he is condemned to die for saying it. It is not out of any concern for the honour of the temple, that they appear thus warm, but because they are resolved not to part with their sins, in which they flatter themselves with a conceit that the *temple of the Lord* will protect them; therefore, right or wrong, *Thou shalt surely die.* This outcry of the priests and prophets raised the mob, and all the people were gathered together against Jeremiah, in a popular tumult, ready to pull him to pieces; were gathered about him; (so some read it;) they flocked together, some crying one thing, and some another. The people that were at first present, were hot against him, (*v. 8.*) but their clamours drew more together, only to see what the matter was.

II. He is arraigned and indicted for it before the highest court of judicature they had. Here, 1. The *princes of Judah* were his judges, *v. 10.* Those that filled the thrones of judgment, the *thrones of the house of David*, the elders of Israel, they, hearing of this tumult in the temple, *came up from the king's house*, where they usually sat near the court, to the house of the Lord, to inquire into this matter, and to see that nothing was done disorderly. They sat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house, and held a court, as it were, by a special commission of Oyer and Terminer. 2. The *priests and prophets* were his persecutors and accusers, and were violently set against him. They appealed to the *princes and to all the people*, to the court and the jury, whether *this man* be not *worthy to die*, *v. 11.* The corrupt priests and counterfeit prophets have always been the most bitter enemies of the prophets of the Lord; they had ends of their own to

serve, which they thought such preaching as this would be an obstruction to. When Jeremiah prophesied in the house of the king concerning the fall of the royal family, (*ch. xxii. 1.*) the court, though very corrupt, bore it patiently, and we do not find that they persecuted him for it; but when he comes into the *house of the Lord*, and touches the copyhold of the priests, and contradicts the lies and flatteries of the false prophets, then he is adjudged *worthy to die*. For the prophets *prophesied falsely*, and the *priests bore rule by their means*, Jer. v. 31. Observe, When Jeremiah is indicted before the princes, the stress of his accusation is laid upon what he said concerning the city, because they thought the princes would be most concerned about that. But concerning the words spoken, they appeal to the people, "*Ye have heard what he hath said, let it be given in evidence.*"

III. Jeremiah makes his defence before the princes and the people. He does not go about to deny the words, or to diminish aught from them; what he has said he will stand to, though it cost him his life; he owns that he had prophesied against *this house, and this city*. But,

1. He asserts that he did this by good authority; not maliciously or seditiously, not out of any ill-will to his country, or any disaffection to the government in church or state, but, *The Lord sent me to prophesy thus*; so he begins his apology, (*v. 12.*) and so he concludes it, for this is that he resolves to abide by as sufficient to hear him out; (*v. 15.*) *Of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you, to speak all these words*. As long as ministers keep close to the instructions they have from heaven, they need not fear the opposition they may meet with from hell or earth. He pleads that he is but a messenger, and if he faithfully deliver his message, he must bear no blame; but he is a messenger from the Lord, to whom they were accountable as well as he, and therefore might demand regard. If he speak but what God appointed him to speak, he is under the divine protection, and whatever affront they offer to the ambassador, will be resented by the Prince that sent him.

2. He shows them that he did it with a good design, and that it was their fault if they did not make a good use of it. It was said, not by way of fatal sentence, but of fair warning; if they would take the warning, they might prevent the execution of the sentence, *v. 13.* Shall I take it ill of a man that tells me of my danger, while I have an opportunity of avoiding it, and not rather return him thanks for it, as the greatest kindness he could do me? "*I have indeed (says Jeremiah) prophesied against this city; but if you will now amend your ways and your doings, the threatened ruin shall be prevented, which was the thing I aimed at in giving you the warning.*" Those are very unjust who complain of ministers for preaching hell and damnation, when it is only to keep them from that place of torment, and to bring them to heaven and salvation.

3. He therefore warns them of their danger, if they proceed against him; (*v. 14.*) "*As for me, the matter is not great what becomes of me; behold, I am in your hand; you know I am; I neither have any power, nor can make any interest, to oppose you, nor is it so much my concern to save my own life; do with me as seems meet unto you; If I be led to the slaughter, it shall be as a lamb.*" Note, It becomes God's ministers, that are warm in preaching, to be calm in suffering, and to behave submissively to the powers that are over them, though they be persecuting powers. But for themselves, he tells them that it is at their peril if they put him to death; *Ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, v. 15.* They might think that killing the prophet would help to defeat the prophecy, but

they would prove wretchedly deceived, it would but add to their guilt, and aggravate their ruin. Their own consciences could not but tell them, that if Jeremiah was (as certainly he was) sent of God to bring them this message, it was at their utmost peril if they treated him for it as a malefactor. Those that persecute God's ministers, hurt not them so much as themselves.

16. Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets, *This man is not worthy to die*; for he hath spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.

17. Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, 18. Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Zion shall be ploughed *like* a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. 19. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls. 20. And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the LORD, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath-jearim, who prophesied against this city, and against this land, according to all the words of Jeremiah: 21. And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death; but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt; 22. And Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt; *namely*, Elnathan the son of Achbor, and *certain* men with him into Egypt: 23. And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt; and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king, who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people. 24. Nevertheless, the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.

Here is, 1. The acquitting of Jeremiah from the charge exhibited against him. He had indeed spoken the words as they were laid in the indictment, but they are not looked upon to be seditious or treasonable, ill-intended, or of any bad tendency, and therefore the court and country agree to find him not guilty. The *priests and prophets*, notwithstanding his rational plea for himself, continued to demand judgment against him; but the *princes*, and *all the people*, are clear in it, *This man is not worthy to die*; (*v. 16.*) for (say they) *he hath spoken to us, not of himself, but in the name of the Lord our God*. And are they willing to own that he did indeed speak to them *in the name of the Lord*, and that that Lord is their God? Why then did they not amend their ways and doings, and take the method

he prescribed to prevent the ruin of their country? If they say, His prophecy is *from heaven*, it may justly be asked, *Why did ye not then believe him?* Matth. xxi. 25. Note, It is pity that those who are so far convinced of the divine original of gospel-preaching, as to protect it from the malice of others, do not submit to the power and influence of it themselves.

2. A precedent quoted to justify them in acquitting Jeremiah. Some of the *elders of the land*, either the princes before mentioned, or the more intelligent men of the people, stood up, and put the assembly in mind of a former case, as is usual with us in giving judgment; for the wisdom of our predecessors is a direction to us. The case referred to is that of Micah. We have extant the book of his prophecy among the minor prophets. (1.) Was it thought strange that Jeremiah prophesied against this city and the temple? Micah did so before him, even in the reign of Hezekiah, that reign of reformation, v. 18. Micah said it as publicly as Jeremiah had now spoken to the same purport, *Zion shall be ploughed like a field, the building shall be all destroyed, so that nothing shall hinder but it may be ploughed; Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the house on which the temple is built shall be as the high places of the forest, overrun with briars and thorns.* That prophet not only spake this, but wrote it, and left it on record; we find it, Mic. iii. 12. By this it appears that a man may be, as Micah was, a true prophet of the Lord, and yet may prophesy the destruction of Zion and Jerusalem. When we threaten secure sinners with the taking away of the Spirit of God and the kingdom of God from them, and declining churches with the removal of the candlestick, we say no more than what has been said many a time, and what we have warrant from the word of God to say. (2.) Was it thought fit by the princes to justify Jeremiah in what he had done? It was what Hezekiah did before them in a like case. Did Hezekiah, and the people of Judah, the representatives of the people, the commons in parliament, did they complain of Micah the prophet? Did they impeach him, or make an act to silence him, and put him to death? No; on the contrary, they took the warning he gave them. Hezekiah, that renowned prince, of blessed memory, set a good example before his successors, for he *feared the Lord* as Noah, who, being *warned of God of things not seen as yet, was moved with fear.* Micah's preaching drove him to his knees; he *besought the Lord* to turn away the judgment threatened, and to be reconciled to them; and he found it was not in vain to do so, for *the Lord repented him of the evil*, and returned in mercy to them; he sent an angel, who routed the army of the Assyrians, that threatened to have ploughed *Zion like a field*, v. 19. Hezekiah got good by the preaching, and then you may be sure he would do no harm to the preacher. These elders conclude that it would be of dangerous consequence to the state, if they should gratify the importunity of the priests and prophets in putting Jeremiah to death; *Thus might we procure great evil against our souls.* Note, It is good to deter ourselves from sin, with the consideration of the mischief we shall certainly do to ourselves by it, and the irreparable damage it will be to our own souls.

3. Here is an instance of another prophet that was put to death by Jehoiakim for prophesying as Jeremiah had done, v. 20, &c. Some make this to be urged by the persecutors, as a case that favoured the prosecution, a modern case, in which speaking such words as Jeremiah had spoken was adjudged treason. Others think that the elders who were advocates for Jeremiah, alleged this, to show that thus they might *procure great evil against their*

souls, for it would be adding sin to sin. Jehoiakim, the present king, had slain one prophet already, let them not fill up the measure by slaying another. Hezekiah, who protected Micah, prospered; but did Jehoiakim prosper, who slew Urijah? No, they all saw the contrary. As good examples, and the good consequences of them, should encourage us in that which is good, so the examples of bad men, and the bad consequences of them, should deter us from that which is evil. But some good interpreters take this narrative from the historian that penned the book, Jeremiah himself, or Baruch, who, to make Jeremiah's deliverance by means of the princes the more wonderful, takes notice of this that happened about the same time; for both were in the reign of Jehoiakim, and this in the *beginning of his reign*, v. 1. Observe, (1.) Urijah's prophecy; it was *against this city, and this land, according to all the words of Jeremiah.* The prophets of the Lord agreed in their testimony, and one would have thought that out of the mouth of so many witnesses the word should have been regarded. (2.) The prosecution of him for it, v. 21. Jehoiakim and his courtiers were exasperated against him, and *sought to put him to death*; in this wicked design the king himself was principally concerned. (3.) His absconding thereupon; *When he heard that the king was become his enemy, and sought his life, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt.* This was certainly his fault, and an effect of the weakness of his faith, and it sped accordingly. He distrusted God, and his power to protect him and bear him out; he was too much under the power of that *fear of man*, which *brings a snare.* It looked as if he durst not stand to what he had said, or was ashamed of his Master. It was especially unbecoming him to flee *into Egypt*, and so in effect to abandon the land of Israel, and to throw himself quite out of the way of being useful. Note, There are many that have much grace, but they have little courage; that are very honest, but withal very timorous. (4.) His execution notwithstanding. Jehoiakim's malice, one would have thought, might have contented itself with his banishment, and it might suffice to have driven him out of the country; but they are *blood thirsty that hate the upright*; (Prov. xxix. 10.) it was the life, that precious life, that he hunted after, and nothing else would satisfy him. So implacable is his revenge, that he sends a party of soldiers into Egypt, some hundreds of miles, and they bring him back by force of arms. It would not sufficiently gratify him to have him slain in Egypt, but he must feed his eyes with the bloody spectacle; they brought him to Jehoiakim, and he *slaw him with the sword*, for aught I know, with his own hands. Yet neither did this satisfy his insatiable malice, but he loads the dead body of the good man with infamy, would not allow it the decent respects usually and justly paid to the remains of men of distinction, but cast it into *the graves of the common people*, as if he had not been a prophet of the Lord; thus was the *shield of Saul vilely cast away, as though he had not been anointed with oil.* Thus Jehoiakim hoped to ruin his reputation with the people, that no heed might be given to his predictions, and to deter others from prophesying in like manner; but in vain; Jeremiah says the same. There is no contending with the word of God. Herod thought he had gained his point when he had cut off John Baptist's head, but found himself deceived, when, soon after, he heard of Jesus Christ, and said, in a fright, *This is John the Baptist.*

4. Here is Jeremiah's deliverance. Though Urijah was lately put to death, and persecutors, when they have tasted the blood of saints, are apt to thirst after more, (as Herod, Acts xii. 2, 3.) yet God wonderfully preserved Jeremiah, though he did not

flee, as Urijah did, but stood his ground. Ordinary ministers may use ordinary means, provided they be lawful ones, for their own preservation; but they that had an extraordinary mission, might expect an extraordinary protection. God raised up a friend for Jeremiah, whose hand was with him; he took him by the hand in a friendly way, encouraged him, assisted him, appeared for him. It was *Ahikam the son of Shaphan*, one that was a minister of state in Josiah's time; we read of him, 2 Kings xxii. 12. Some think Gedaliah was the son of this Ahikam. He had a great interest, it should seem, among the princes, and he used it in favour of Jeremiah, to prevent the further designs of the priests and prophets against him, who would have had him turned over into the hand of the people; not those people (v. 16.) that had adjudged him innocent, but the rude and insolent mob, whom they could persuade by their cursed insinuations not only to cry, *Crucify him, crucify him*, but to stone him to death in a popular tumult; for perhaps Jehoiakim had been so reproached by his own conscience for slaying Urijah, that they despaired of making him the tool of their malice. Note, God can, when he pleases, raise up great men to patronise good men; and it is an encouragement to us to trust him in the way of duty, that he has all men's hearts in his hands.

CHAP. XXVII.

Jeremiah the prophet, since he cannot persuade people to submit to God's precept, and so to prevent the destruction of their country by the king of Babylon, is here persuading them to submit to God's providence, by yielding tamely to the king of Babylon, and becoming tributaries to him, which was the wisest course they could now take, and would be a mitigation of the calamity, and prevent the laying of their country waste by fire and sword; the sacrificing of their liberties would be the saving of their lives. 1. He gives this counsel, in God's name, to the kings of the neighbouring nations, that they might make the best of bad, assuring them that there was no remedy, but they must serve the king of Babylon; and yet in time there should be relief, for his dominion should last but 70 years, v. 1. . 11. 11. He gives this counsel to Zedekiah king of Judah particularly, (v. 12. . 14.) and to the priests and people, assuring them that the king of Babylon should still proceed against them, till things were brought to the last extremity, and a patient submission would be the only way to mitigate the calamity, and make it easy, v. 12. . 22. Thus the prophet, if they would but have hearkened to him, would have directed them in the paths of true policy as well as of true piety.

1. **I**N the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, came this word unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2. Thus saith the LORD to me, Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck. 3. And send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyrus, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah; 4. And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Thus shall ye say unto your masters; 5. I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power, and by my out-stretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. 6. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Ne-

buchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given ^{to him} also to serve him. 7. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come; and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him. 8. And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand. 9. Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: 10. For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish. 11. But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the LORD; and they shall till it, and dwell therein.

Some difficulty occurs in the date of this prophecy. This word is said to come to Jeremiah in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, (v. 1.) and yet the messengers, to whom he is to deliver the badges of servitude, are said (v. 3.) to come to Zedekiah king of Judah, who reigned not till 11 years after the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign. Some make it an error of the copy, and that it should be read, (v. 1.) *In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah*, for which some negligent scribe, having his eye on the title of the foregoing chapter, wrote *Jehoiakim*. And if one would admit a mistake any where, it should be here, for Zedekiah is mentioned again, (v. 12.) and the next prophecy is dated the same year, and said to be in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, ch. xxviii. 1. Dr. Lightfoot solves it thus, In the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign, Jeremiah is to make these bonds and yokes, and to put them upon his own neck, in token of Judah's subjection to the king of Babylon, which began at that time; but he is to send them to the neighbouring kings afterward in the reign of Zedekiah, of whose succession to Jehoiakim, and the ambassadors sent to him, mention is made by way of prediction.

1. Jeremiah is to prepare a sign of the general reduction of all these countries into subjection to the king of Babylon, v. 2. *Make thee bonds and yokes*, yokes with bonds to fasten them, that the beast may not slip his neck out of the yoke. Into these the prophet must put his own neck, to make them taken notice of as a prophetic representation; for every one would inquire, What is the meaning of Jeremiah's yokes? We find him with one on, ch. xxviii. 10. Hereby he intimated that he advised them to nothing but what he was resolved to do himself; for he was none of those that bind heavy burthens on others, which they themselves will not touch with one of their fingers. Ministers must thus lay themselves under the weight and obligation of what they preach to others.

II. He is to send this, with a sermon annexed to it, to all the neighbouring princes; those *2* mentioned, (*v. 3.*) that lay next to the land of *Evanaan*. It should seem, there was a treaty of alliance foot between the king of Judah and all those *other* *ggs*. Jerusalem was the place appointed for the *ggs*; thither they all sent their plenipotentiaries; and it was agreed that they should bind themselves in a league offensive and defensive, to stand by one another, in opposition to the growing, threatening greatness of the king of Babylon, and to reduce his exorbitant power. They had great confidence in their strength thus united, and were ready to call themselves the High Allies; but when the envoys were returning to their respective masters, with the ratification of this treaty, Jeremiah gives each of them a yoke to carry to his master, to signify to him that he must either by consent or by compulsion become a servant to the king of Babylon, let him choose which he will. In the sermon upon this sign,

1. God asserts his own indisputable right to dispose of kingdoms as he pleases, *v. 5.* He is the Creator of all things; he *made the earth* at first, established it, and it abides; it is still the same, though *one generation passeth away, and another comes*; he still by a continued creation produces *man and beast upon the ground*; and it is by his *great power and outstretched arm*. His arm has infinite strength, though it be *stretched out*. Upon this account, he may give and convey a property and dominion to whomsoever he pleases. As he hath graciously *given the earth to the children of men* in general, (*Ps. cxv. 16.*) so he gives to each his share of it, be it more or less. Note, Whatever any have of the good things of this world, it is what God sees fit to give them; we ourselves should therefore be content, though we have ever so little, and not envy any their share, though they have ever so much.

2. He publishes a grant of all these countries to Nebuchadnezzar. Know all men by these presents. *Sciant presentes et futuri:—Let those of the present and those of the future age know.* "This is to certify all whom it may concern, that I have *given all these lands*, with all the wealth of them, *into the hands of the king of Babylon*, even the beasts of the field, whether tame or wild, *have I given to him*, parks and pastures, they are all his own." Nebuchadnezzar was a proud, wicked man, an idolater; and yet God, in his providence, gives him this large dominion, these vast possessions. Note, The things of this world are not the best things, for God often gives the largest share of them to bad men, that are rivals with him, and rebels against him. He was a wicked man, and yet what he had, he had by divine grant. Note, Dominion is not founded in grace. Those that have not any colourable title to eternal happiness, may yet have a justifiable title to their temporal good things. Nebuchadnezzar is a very bad man, and yet God calls him his servant, because he employed him as an instrument of his providence for the chastising of the nations, and particularly his own people; and for his service therein, he thus liberally repaid him. Those whom God makes use of, shall not lose by him; much more will he be found the bountiful Rewarder of all those that designedly and sincerely serve him.

3. He assures them that they should all be unavoidably brought under the dominion of the king of Babylon, for a time; (*v. 7.*) *All nations*, all these nations, and many others, shall serve *him and his son, and his son's son*. His son was Evil-merodach, and his son's son Belshazzar, in whom his kingdom ceased: then the time of reckoning with his land came, when the tables were turned, and *many nations and great kings*, incorporated into the empire of the

Medes and Persians, *served themselves of him*, as before, *ch. xxv. 14.* Thus Adonibezek was trampled upon himself, as he had trampled on other kings.

4. He threatens those with military execution, that stood out, and would not submit to the king of Babylon; (*v. 8.*) That nation that will not *put their neck under his yoke*, I will *punish with sword and famine*, with one judgment after another, till it is *consumed by his hand*. Nebuchadnezzar was very unjust and barbarous in invading the rights and liberties of his neighbours thus, and forcing them into a subjection to him; yet God had just and holy ends in permitting it, to punish these nations for their idolatry and gross immoralities. They that would not serve the God that made them, were justly made to serve their enemies that sought to ruin them.

5. He shows them the vanity of all the hopes they fed themselves with, that they should preserve their liberties, *v. 9, 10.* These nations had their prophets too, that pretended to foretell future events by the stars, or by dreams, or enchantments; and they, to please their patrons, and because they would themselves have it so, flattered them with assurances that they *should not serve the king of Babylon*. Thus they designed to animate them to a vigorous resistance; and though they had no ground for it, they hoped hereby to do them service. But he tells them that it would prove to their destruction; for by resisting they would provoke the conqueror to deal severely with them, to *remove them, and drive them out* into a miserable captivity, in which they should all be lost, and buried in oblivion. Particular prophecies against these nations that bordered on Israel severally, the ruin of which is here foretold in the general, we shall meet with, *ch. xlviii.* and *Ezek. xxv.* which had the same accomplishment with this here. Note, When God judges, he will overcome.

6. He puts them in a fair way to prevent their destruction, by a quiet and easy submission, *v. 11.* The nations that will be content to *serve the king of Babylon*, and pay him tribute for seventy years, (ten apprenticeships,) *those will I let remain still in their own land*. They that will bend shall not break. Perhaps the dominion of the king of Babylon may bear no harder upon them than that of their own kings had done. It is often more a point of honour than true wisdom, to prefer liberty before life. It is not mentioned to the disgrace of Issachar, that because he saw *rest was good*, and the *land pleasant*, that he might peaceably enjoy it, he bowed his shoulder to bear, and *became a servant to tribute*, (*Gen. lix. 14, 15.*) as these here are advised to do; *Serve the king of Babylon, and you shall till the land and dwell therein*. Some would condemn this as the evidence of a mean spirit, but the prophet recommends it as that of a meek spirit, which yields to necessity, and by a quiet submission to the hardest turns of Providence, makes the best of bad: it is better to do so, than by struggling to make it worse.

—Levius fit patientia

Quicquid corrigere est nefas.—Hor.

—When we needs must bear,

Enduring patience makes the burthen light.—CERCH.

Many might have prevented destroying providences, by humbling themselves under humbling providences. It is better to take up a lighter cross in our way than to pull a heavier on our own head.

12. I spake also to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live 13 Why will ye die, thou and

thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the LORD hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? 14. Therefore hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you. 15. For I have not sent them, saith the LORD, yet they prophesy a lie in my name, that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you. 16. Also I spake to the priests, and to all this people, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hearken not to the words of your prophets that prophesy unto you, saying, Behold, the vessels of the LORD's house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you. 17. Hearken not unto them; serve the king of Babylon, and live: wherefore should this city be laid waste? 18. But if they be prophets, and if the word of the LORD be with them, let them now make intercession to the LORD of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, go not to Babylon. 19. For thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the bases, and concerning the residue of the vessels that remain in this city, 20. Which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took not, when he carried away captive Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem; 21. Yea, thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem; 22. They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the LORD: then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place.

What was said to all the nations, is here with a particular tenderness applied to the nation of the Jews, for whom Jeremiah was sensibly concerned. The case at present stood thus; Judah and Jerusalem had often contested with the king of Babylon, and still were worsted; many both of their valuable persons and their valuable goods were carried to Babylon already, and some of the vessels of the Lord's house particularly. Now, how this struggle would issue, was the question. They had those among them at Jerusalem, who pretended to be prophets, who bade them hold out, and they should, in a little time, be too hard for the king of Babylon, and recover all that they had lost. Now Jeremiah is sent to bid them yield and knock under, for that, instead of recovering what they had lost, they should otherwise lose all that remained; and to press them to this, is the scope of these verses.

I. Jeremiah humbly addresses the king of Judah, to persuade him to surrender to the king of Baby-

lon; his act would be the people's, and would determine them, and therefore he speaks to him as to them all; (v. 12.) *Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and live.* Is it their wisdom to submit to the heavy iron yoke of a cruel tyrant, that they may secure the lives of their bodies; and is it not much more our wisdom to submit to the sweet and easy yoke of our rightful Lord and Master Jesus Christ, that we may secure the lives of our souls? Bring down your spirits to repentance and faith, and that is the way to bring up your spirits to heaven and glory. And with much more cecency and compassion may we expostulate with perishing souls than Jeremiah here expostulates with a perishing people, "*Why will ye die by the sword and the famine—miserable deaths, which you inevitably run yourselves upon, under pretence of avoiding miserable lives?*" What God had spoken, in general, of all those that would not submit to the king of Babylon, he would have them to apply to themselves, and be afraid of. It were well if sinners would, in like manner, be afraid of the destruction threatened against all those that will not have Christ to reign over them, and reason thus with themselves, "*Why should we die the second death, which is a thousand times worse than that by sword and famine, when we might submit and live?*"

II. He addresses himself likewise to the priests and the people, (v. 16.) to persuade them to serve the king of Babylon, that they might live, and might prevent the desolation of the city; (v. 17.) "*Wherefore should it be laid waste, as certainly it will be if you stand it out?*" The priests had been Jeremiah's enemies, and had sought his life to destroy it, yet he approves himself their friend, and seeks their lives, to preserve and secure them; which is an example to us to render good for evil. When the bloodthirsty hate the upright, yet the just seek his soul, and the welfare of it, Prov. xxix. 10. The matter was far gone here, they were upon the brink of ruin, which they had not been brought to if they would have taken Jeremiah's counsel, yet he continues his friendly admonitions to them, to save the last stake and manage that wisely, and now at length in this their day to understand the things that belong to their peace, when they had but one day to turn them in.

III. In both these addresses he warns them against giving credit to the false prophets that rocked them asleep in their security, because they saw that they loved to slumber; "*Hearken not to the words of the prophets, (v. 14.) your prophets, v. 16.* They are not God's prophets, he never sent them, they do not serve him, nor seek to please him; they are yours, for they say what you would have them say, and aim at nothing but to please you."

Two things their prophets flattered them into th belief of.

1. That the power which the king of Babylon had gained over them, should now shortly be broken. They said, (v. 14.) "*You shall not serve the king of Babylon; you need not submit voluntarily, for you shall not be compelled to submit.*" This they prophesied in the name of the Lord, (v. 15.) as if God had sent them to the people on this errand, in kindness to them, that they might not disparage themselves by an inglorious surrender. But it was a lie. They said that God sent them; but that was false, he disowns it, *I have not sent them, saith the Lord.* They said that they should never be brought into subjection to the king of Babylon; but that was false too, the event proved it so. They said that to hold out to the last would be the way to secure themselves and their city; but that was false, for it would certainly end in their being driven out and perishing. So that it was all a lie, from first to last; and the prophets that deceived the people with these

lies, did, in the issue, but deceive themselves, the blind leaders and the blind followers fell together into the ditch; that *ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you*; who will be so far from warranting your security, that they cannot secure themselves. Note, They that encourage sinners to go on in their sinful ways, will in the end perish with them.

2. They prophesied that the vessels of the temple, which the king of Babylon had already carried away, should now shortly be brought back; (v. 16.) this they fed the priests with the hopes of, knowing how acceptable it would be to them who loved the *gold of the temple* better than the *temple that sanctified the gold*. These vessels were taken away when Jeconiah was carried captive into Babylon, v. 20. We have the story, and it is a melancholy one, 2 Kings xxiv. 13.—15. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 10. All the *goodly vessels*, that is, all the *vessels of gold* that were in the house of the Lord, with all the treasures, were taken as prey, and brought to Babylon. This was grievous to them above any thing, for the temple was their pride and confidence, and the stripping of that was too plain an indication of that which the true prophet told them, that their *God was departed from them*. Their false prophets therefore had no other way to make them easy than by telling them that the king of Babylon should be forced to restore them in a little while. Now here,

(1.) Jeremiah bids them think of preserving the vessels that remained, by their prayers, rather than of bringing back those that were gone, by their prophecies; (v. 18.) *If they be prophets*, as they pretend, and if *the word of the Lord be with them*—if they have any intercourse with Heaven, and any interest there, let them improve it for the stopping of the progress of the judgment, let them step into the gap, and stand with their censer *between the living and the dead*, between that which is carried away and that which remains, that *the plague may be stayed*; let them *make intercession with the Lord of hosts*, that the vessels which are left go not after the rest. [1.] Instead of *prophesying*, let them *pray*. Note, Prophets must be praying men; by being much in prayer they must make it to appear that they keep up a correspondence with Heaven. We cannot think that those do, as prophets, ever hear thence, who do not frequently by prayer send thither. By praying for the safety and prosperity of the sanctuary they must make it to appear that, as becomes prophets, they are of a public spirit; and by the success of their prayers it will appear that God favours them. [2.] Instead of being concerned for the retrieving of what they had lost, they must bestir themselves for the securing of what was left, and take it as a great favour if they can gain that point. When God's judgments are abroad, we must not seek great things, but be thankful for a little.

(2.) He assures them that even this point should not be gained, but the brazen vessels should go after the golden ones, v. 19.—22. Nebuchadnezzar had found so good a booty once, that he would be sure to come again, and take all he could find, not only in the house of the Lord, but in the king's house. They shall all be carried to Babylon in triumph, and *there shall they be*. But he concludes with a gracious promise, that the time should come when they should all be returned; *Until the day that I visit them in mercy*, according to appointment, and *then I will bring those vessels up again, and restore them to this place*, to their place. Surely they were under the protection of a special Providence, else they had been melted down, and put to some other use; but there was to be a second temple, for which they were to be reserved. We read particularly of the return of them, Ezra i. 8. Note, Though the return of the church's prosperity do not come in our time,

we must not therefore despair of it, for it will come in God's time. Though they who said, *The vessels of the Lord's house shall shortly be brought again*, prophesied a lie, (v. 16.) yet he that said, *They shall at length be brought again, prophesied the truth*. We are apt to set our clock before God's dial, and then to quarrel because they do not agree; but the Lord is a God of judgment, and it is fit that we should wait for him.

CHAP. XXVIII.

In the foregoing chapter, Jeremiah had charged those prophets with lies, who foretold the speedy breaking of the yoke of the king of Babylon, and the speedy return of the vessels of the sanctuary; now here we have his contest with a particular prophet upon those heads. I. Hananiah, a pretender to prophecy, in contradiction to Jeremiah, foretold the sinking of Nebuchadnezzar's power, and the return both of the persons and of the vessels that were carried away; (v. 1. . 4.) and, as a sign of this, he brake the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah, v. 10, 11. II. Jeremiah wished his words might prove true, but appealed to the event, whether they were so or no, not doubting but they would disprove them, v. 5. . 9. III. The doom both of the deceived and the deceiver is here read. The people that were deceived, should have their yoke of wood turned into a yoke of iron, (v. 12. . 14.) and the prophet that was the deceiver, should be shortly cut off by death, and he was so, accordingly, within two months, v. 15. . 17.

1. **A**ND it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which *was* of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests, and of all the people, saying, 2. Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. 3. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD's house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: 4. And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the LORD: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. 5. Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah, in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the LORD, 6. Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the LORD do so; the LORD perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the LORD's house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place. 7. Nevertheless, hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people; 8. The prophets that have been before me, and before thee of old, prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. 9. The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, *then*

shall the prophet be known that the LORD hath truly sent him.

This struggle between a true prophet and a false one, is said here to have happened in the *beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, and yet in the fourth year*, for the four first years of his reign might well be called the *beginning*, or former part of it, because during those years he reigned under the dominion of the king of Babylon, and as a tributary to him; whereas the rest of his reign, which might well be called the *latter part* of it, in distinction from that *former part*, he reigned in rebellion against the king of Babylon. In this fourth year of his reign, he went in person to Babylon, (as we find, *ch. li. 59.*) and it is probable that this gave the people some hope that his negotiation in person would put a good end to the war, in which hope the false prophets encouraged them, this Hananiah particularly, who was of Gibeon, a priest's city, and therefore probably, himself a priest, as well as Jeremiah. Now here we have,

I. The prediction which Hananiah delivered publicly, solemnly, *in the house of the Lord*, and in the name of the Lord, in an august assembly, *in the presence of the priests, and of all the people*, who, probably, were expecting to have some message from heaven. In delivering this prophecy, he faced Jeremiah, he spake it to him, (*v. 1.*) designing to confront and contradict him, as much as to say, "Jeremiah, thou liest." Now his prediction is, that the king of Babylon's power, at least his power over Judah and Jerusalem, should be speedily broken, that *within two full years* the vessels of the temple should be brought back, and Jecemiah, and all the captives that were carried away with him, should return; whereas Jeremiah had foretold that the yoke of the king of Babylon should be bound on yet faster, and that the vessels and captives should not return for 70 years, *v. 2.—4.* Now, upon the reading of this sham prophecy, and comparing it with the messages that God sent by the true prophets, we may observe what a vast difference there is between them. Here is nothing of the spirit and life, the majesty of style and sublimity of expression, that appear in the discourses of God's prophets, nothing of that divine flame and *flatus*. But that which is especially wanting here, is, an air of piety; he speaks with a great deal of confidence of the return of their prosperity, but here is not a word of good counsel given them to repent and reform, and return to God, to pray, and seek his face, that they might be prepared for the favours God had in reserve for them. He promises them temporal mercies, in God's name, but makes no mention of those spiritual mercies which God always promised should go along with them, as *ch. xxiv. 7. I will give them a heart to know me.* By all which it appears that, whatever he pretended, he had only the *spirit of the world*, not the *Spirit of God*, (1 Cor. ii. 12.) that he aimed to please, not to profit.

II. Jeremiah's reply to this pretended prophecy:

1. He heartily wishes it might prove true; such an affection has he for his country, and so truly desirous is he of the welfare of it, that he would be content to lie under the imputation of a false prophet, so that their ruin might be prevented. He said, *Amen, the Lord do so, the Lord perform thy words, v. 5, 6.* This was not the first time that Jeremiah had prayed for his people, though he had prophesied against them, and deprecated the judgments, which yet he certainly knew would come; as Christ prayed, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me*, when yet he knew it must not pass from him. Though, as a faithful prophet, he foresaw and foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, yet, as a faithful Israelite, he prayed earnestly for the

preservation of it, in obedience to that command, *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.* Though the will of God's purpose is the rule of prophecy and patience, the will of his precept is the rule of prayer and practice. God himself, though he has determined, does not desire, the death of sinners, but would *have all men to be saved.* Jeremiah often interceded for his people, *ch. xviii. 20.* The false prophets thought to ingratiate themselves with the people by promising them peace; now the prophet shows that he bore them as great a good-will as their prophets did, whom they were so fond of; and though he had no warrant from God to promise them peace, yet he earnestly desired it, and prayed for it. How strangely were they besotted, who caressed those who did them the greatest wrong imaginable by flattering them, and persecuted him who did them the greatest service imaginable by interceding for them! See *ch. xxvii. 18.*

2. He appeals to the event, to prove it false, *v. 7.*
—9. The false prophets reflected upon Jeremiah, as Ahab upon Micaiah, because he never *prophesied good concerning them, but evil*; now he pleads that this had been the purport of the prophecies that other prophets had delivered, so that it ought not to be looked upon as a strange thing, or as rendering his mission doubtful, for prophets of old prophesied against *many countries and great kingdoms*, so bold were they in delivering the messages which God sent by them, and so far from fearing men, or seeking to please them, as Hananiah did; they made no difficulty, any more than Jeremiah did, of threatening war, famine, and pestilence, and what they said was regarded as coming from God; why then should Jeremiah be run down as a *pestilent fellow, and a sower of sedition*, who preached no otherwise than God's prophets had always done before him? Other prophets had foretold destruction, and sometimes the destruction did not come, which yet did not disprove their divine mission, as in the case of Jonah, for God is gracious, and ready to turn away his wrath from those that turn away from their sins: but the prophet that *prophesied of peace and prosperity*, especially as Hananiah did, absolutely and unconditionally, without adding that necessary proviso, that they do not by wilful sin put a bar in their own door, and stop the current of God's favours, will be proved a true prophet only by the accomplishment of his prediction; if it come to pass, then it shall be known that *the Lord has sent him*, but if not, he will appear to be a cheat and an impostor.

10. Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it. 11. And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations, within the space of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way. 12. Then the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah the prophet, (after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah,) saying, 13. Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron. 14. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall

serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also. 15. Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah, The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. 16. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD. 17. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year, in the seventh month.

We have here an instance,

I. Of the insolence of the false prophet. To complete the affront he designed Jeremiah, *he took the yoke from off his neck*, which he carried as a memorial of what he had prophesied concerning the enslaving of the nations to Nebuchadnezzar, and he brake it, that he might give a sign of the accomplishment of his prophecy, as Jeremiah had given of his, and might seem to have conquered him, and to have defeated the intention of his prophecy. See how the lying spirit in the mouth of this false prophet mimics the language of the Spirit of truth; *Thus saith the Lord, So will I break the yoke of the king of Babylon*, not only from the neck of this nation, but *from the neck of all nations, within two full years*. Whether by the force of a heated imagination Hananiah had persuaded himself to believe this, or whether he knew it to be false, and only persuaded them to believe it, does not appear; but it is plain that he speaks with abundance of assurance. It is no new thing for lies to be fathered upon the God of truth.

II. Of the patience of the true prophet. Jeremiah quietly *went his way*, and, when he was *reviled*, he *reviled not again*, and would not contend with one that was in the height of his fury, and in the midst of the priests and people that were violently set against him. The reason why he went his way, was, not because he had nothing to answer, but because he was willing to stay till God was pleased to furnish him with a direct and immediate answer, which as yet he had not received. He expected that God would send a special message to Hananiah, and he would say nothing till he had received that; *I, as a deaf man, heard not, for thou wilt hear, and thou shalt answer, Lord, for me*. It may sometimes be our wisdom rather to retreat than to contend. *Currenti cede furor—Give place unto wrath*.

III. Of the justice of God in giving judgment between Jeremiah and his adversary. Jeremiah went his way, as a man in whose mouth there was no rebuke, but God soon put a word into his mouth, for he will appear for those who silently commit their cause to him.

1. The word of God, in the mouth of Jeremiah, is ratified and confirmed. Let not Jeremiah himself distrust the truth of what he had delivered in God's name, because it met with such a daring opposition and contradiction. If what we have spoken be the truth of God, we must not unsay it because men gainsay it; for *great is the truth, and will prevail*. It will stand, therefore let us stand to it, and not fear that men's unbelief or blasphemy will make it of no effect. Hananiah has broken the *yokes of wood*, but Jeremiah must make for them *yokes of iron*, which cannot be broken; (v. 13.) for (says God) *"I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, which shall be heavier, and bind harder, upon them, (v. 14.) that they may serve the king of Babylon, and not be able to shake off the yoke, however they may struggle, for they shall serve him whether they will or no;"* and who is he that can contend with

God's counsel? What was said before is repeated again, *I have given him the beasts of the field also*, as if there were something significant in that; men had by their wickedness made themselves *like the beasts that perish*, and therefore deserved to be ruled by an arbitrary power, as beasts are ruled, and such a power Nebuchadnezzar ruled with, for *whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive*.

2. Hananiah is sentenced to die for contradicting it, and Jeremiah, when he has received commission from God, boldly tells him so to his face; though, before he received that commission, he went away, and said nothing.

(1.) The crimes of which Hananiah stands convicted, are, cheating the people, and affronting God; *Thou makest this people to trust in a lie*, encouraging them to hope that they shall have peace, which will make their destruction the more terrible to them when it comes; yet this was not the worst; *Thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord*, thou hast taught them to despise all the good counsel given them in God's name by the true prophets, and hast rendered it ineffectual. Those have a great deal to answer for, who, by telling sinners that they shall have peace though they go on, harden their hearts in a contempt of the reproofs and admonitions of the word, and the means and methods God takes to bring them to repentance.

(2.) The judgment given against him, is, *"I will cast thee off from the face of the earth, as unworthy to live upon it; thou shalt be buried in it; this year thou shalt die, and die as a rebel against the Lord, to whom death will come with a sting and a curse."* This sentence was executed, v. 17. Hananiah died the same year, within two months: for his prophecy is dated the fifth month, (v. 1.) and his death the seventh. Good men may perhaps be suddenly taken off by death, in the midst of their days, and in mercy to them, as Josiah was; but this being foretold, as the punishment of his sin, and coming to pass accordingly, it may safely be construed as a testimony from Heaven against him, and a confirmation of Jeremiah's mission. And if the people's hearts had not been wretchedly hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, it would have prevented their being further hardened by the deceitfulness of their prophets.

CHAP. XXIX.

The contest between Jeremiah and the false prophets was carried on before by preaching, here by writing: there we had sermon against sermon, here we have letter against letter; for some of the false prophets are now carried away into captivity in Babylon, while Jeremiah remains in his own country. Now here is, I. A letter which Jeremiah wrote to the captives in Babylon, against their prophets that they had there, (v. 1..3.) in which letter, 1. He endeavours to reconcile them to their captivity, to be easy under it, and to make the best of it, v. 4..7. 2. He cautions them not to give any credit to their false prophets, who fed them with hopes of a speedy release, v. 8, 9. 3. He assures them that God would restore them in mercy to their own land again, at the end of 70 years, v. 10..14. 4. He foretells the destruction of those who yet continued, and that they should be persecuted with one judgment after another, and sent at last into captivity, v. 15..19. 5. He prophesies the destruction of two of their false prophets that they had in Babylon, that both soothed them up in their sins, and set them bad examples; (v. 20..23.) and this is the purport of Jeremiah's letter. II. Here is a letter which Shemaiah, a false prophet in Babylon, wrote to the priests at Jerusalem, to stir them up to persecute Jeremiah, (v. 24..29.) and a denunciation of God's wrath against him for writing such a letter, v. 30..32. Such struggles as these have there always been between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

1. **N**OW these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent

from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon, 2. (After that Jeconiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the carpenters, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem,) 3. By the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,) saying, 4. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon, 5. Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; 6. Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. 7. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

We are here told,

I. That Jeremiah wrote to the captives in Babylon, in the name of the Lord. Jeconiah had surrendered himself a prisoner, with the queen his mother, the chamberlains of his household, called here the eunuchs, many of the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, who were at that time the most active men; the carpenters and smiths likewise, being demanded, were yielded up, that those who remained might not have any proper hands to fortify their city, or furnish themselves with weapons of war; by this tame submission it was hoped that Nebuchadnezzar would be pacified; *Satis est prostrasse leoni*—It suffices the lion to have laid his antagonist prostrate; but the imperious conqueror grows upon their concessions, like Benhadad upon Ahab's, 1 Kings xx. 5, 6. And not content with this, when these were departed from Jerusalem, he comes again, and fetches away many more of the elders, the priests, the prophets, and the people, (v. 1.) such as he thought fit, or such as his soldiers could lay hands on, and carries them to Babylon. The case of these captives was very melancholy, the rather, because they, being thus distinguished from the rest of their brethren who continued in their own land, looked as if they were greater sinners than all men who dwelt at Jerusalem. Jeremiah therefore writes a letter to them to comfort them, assuring them that they had no reason either to despair of succour themselves, or to envy their brethren that were left behind. Note, 1. The word of God written, is as truly given by inspiration of God as his word spoken was; and this was the proper way of spreading the knowledge of God's will among his children scattered abroad. 2. We may serve God, and do good, by writing to our friends at a distance pious letters of seasonable comforts and wholesome counsels. Whom we cannot speak to, we may write to; that which is written

remains. This letter of Jeremiah's was sent to the captives in Babylon by the hands of the ambassadors whom king Zedekiah sent to Nebuchadnezzar, probably to pay him his tribute, and renew his submission to him, or to treat of peace with him, in which treaty the captives might perhaps hope that they should be included, v. 3. By such messengers Jeremiah chose to send this message, to put an honour upon it because it was a message from God. Or, perhaps, because there was no settled way of sending letters to Babylon, but as such an occasion as this offered. And then it made the condition of the captives there the more melancholy, that they could rarely hear from their friends and relations they had left behind, which is some reviving and satisfaction to those that are separated from one another.

II. We are here told what he wrote. A copy of a letter at large follows here to v. 24. In these verses,

1. He assures them that he wrote in the name of the Lord of hosts the God of Israel, who edited the letter; Jeremiah was but the scribe or amanuensis. It would be comfortable to them, in their captivity, to hear that God is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, and is therefore able to help and deliver them; and that he is the God of Israel still, a God in covenant with his people, though he contend with them, and their enemies for the present are too hard for them; this would likewise be an admonition to them to stand upon their guard against all temptations to the idolatry of Babylon, because the God of Israel, the God whom they served, is Lord of hosts. God's sending to them in this letter might be an encouragement to them in their captivity, as it was an evidence that he had not cast them off, had not abandoned them and disinherited them, though he was displeased with them and corrected them; for if the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have written to them.

2. God by him owns the hand he had in their captivity; *I have caused you to be carried away*, (v. 4.) and again, v. 7. All the force of the king of Babylon could not have done it, if God had not ordered it; nor could he have any power against them, but what was given him from above. If God caused them to be carried captives, they might be sure that he neither did them any wrong, nor meant them any hurt. Note, It will help very much to reconcile us to our troubles, and to make us patient under them, to consider that they are what God has appointed us to; *I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it*.

3. He bids them think of nothing but settling there; and therefore let them resolve to make the best of it; (v. 5, 6.) *Build ye houses, and dwell in them*, &c. By all this it is intimated to them, (1.) That they must not feed themselves with hopes of a speedy return out of their captivity, for that would keep them still unsettled, and, consequently, uneasy; they would apply themselves to no business, take no comfort, but be always tiring themselves, and provoking their conquerors, with the expectations of relief; and their disappointment at last would sink them into despair, and make their condition much more miserable than otherwise it would be; let them therefore count upon a continuance there, and accommodate themselves to it as well as they can. Let them build, and plant, and marry, and dispose of their children there, as if they were at home in their own land; let them take a pleasure in seeing their families built up and multiplied, for though they must expect themselves to die in captivity, yet their children may live to see better days. If they live in the fear of God, what should hinder them but they may live comfortably in Babylon? They cannot but weep sometimes

when they remember Zion; but let not weeping hinder sowing, let them not *sorrow as those that have no hope*, no joy, for they have both. Note, In all conditions of life, it is our wisdom and duty to make the best of that which is, and not to throw away the comfort of what we *may* have, because we have not all we *would* have. We have a natural affection for our native country, it strangely draws our minds; but it is with a *nescio qua dulcedine*—we can give no good account of the sweet attraction; and therefore if Providence remove us to some other country, we must resolve to live easy there, to bring our mind to our condition, when our condition is not in every thing to our mind; if the earth be the Lord's, then, wherever a child of God goes, he does not go off his father's ground; *Patria est ubicunque bene est*—That place is our country in which we are well off. If things be not as they have been, instead of fretting at that, we must live in hopes that they will be better than they are.

Non si male nunc, et olim sic erit.
Though we suffer now, we shall not always.

(2.) That they must not disquiet themselves with fears of intolerable hardships in their captivity. They might be ready to suggest (as persons in trouble are always apt to make the worst of things,) that it would be in vain to *build houses*, for their lords and masters would not suffer them to dwell in them when they had built them, nor to eat the fruit of the *vineyards* they planted; "Never fear," says God; "if you *live peaceably* with them, you shall find them civil to you." Meek and quiet people, that work, and mind their own business, have often found much better treatment, even with strangers and enemies, than they expected; and God has made his people to be *fitted of those that carried them captive*; (Ps. cvi. 40.) and pity it is, but that those who have built houses, should dwell in them. Nay,

4. He directs them to seek the good of the country where they were captives, (v. 7.) to *pray* for it, to endeavour it. This forbids them to attempt any thing against the public peace, while they were subjects to the king of Babylon; though he was a heathen, an idolater, an oppressor, and an enemy to God and his church, yet, while he gave them protection, they must pay him allegiance; and live *quiet and peaceable lives* under him, in all *godliness and honesty*; not plotting to shake off his yoke, but patiently leaving it to God in due time to work deliverance for them. Nay, they must pray to God for the peace of the place where they were, that they might oblige them to continue their kindness to them, and disprove the character that had been given their nation, that they were *hurtful to kings and provinces*, and *moved sedition*, Ezra iv. 15. Both the wisdom of the serpent, and the innocence of the dove, required them to be true to the government they lived under; *for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace*; should the country be embroiled in war, they would have the greatest share in the calamitous effects of it. Thus the primitive Christians, according to the temper of their holy religion, prayed for the powers that were, though they were persecuting powers. And if they were to pray for, and seek the peace of, the land of their captivity, much more reason have we to pray for the welfare of the land of our nativity, where we are a free people under a good government, *that in the peace thereof we and ours may have peace*. Every passenger is concerned in the safety of the ship.

3. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams

which ye cause to be dreamed. 9. For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name; I have not sent them, saith the Lord. 10. For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word towards you, in causing you to return to this place. 11. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. 12. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. 13. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. 14. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord; and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

To make the people quiet and easy in their captivity,

1. God takes them off from building upon the false bottom which their pretended prophets laid, v. 8, 9. They told them that their captivity should be short, and therefore that they must not think of taking root in Babylon, but be upon the wing to go back: "Now, herein, they deceive you," (says God.) "they prophesy a lie to you, though they prophesy in my name. But let them not deceive you, suffer not yourselves to be deluded by them." As long as we have the word of truth to try the spirits by, it is our own fault if we be deceived; for by it we may be undeceived. *Hearken not to your dreams, which ye cause to be dreamed*. He means either the dreams or fancies which the people pleased themselves with, and with which they filled their own heads; by thinking and speaking of nothing else but a speedy enlargement when they were awake, they caused themselves to dream of it when they were asleep, and then took that for a good omen, and with it strengthened themselves in their vain expectations; or, the dreams which the prophets dreamed, and grounded their prophecies upon. God tells the people, *They are your dreams*, because they pleased them, were the dreams that they desired and wished for; they caused them to be dreamed, for they hearkened to them, and encouraged the prophets to put such deceits upon them, desiring them to prophesy nothing but *smooth things*, Isa. xxx. 10. They were dreams of their own bespeaking. False prophets would not flatter people in their sins, but that they love to be flattered, and speak smoothly to their prophets that their prophets may speak smoothly to them.

II. He gives them a good bottom to build their hopes upon. We would not persuade people to pull down the house they have built upon the sand, but that there is a rock ready for them to rebuild upon. God here promises them, that though they should not return quickly, they should return at length, *after 70 years be accomplished*. By this it appears, that the 70 years of the captivity are not to be reckoned from the last captivity, but the first. Note, Though the deliverance of the church do not come in our time, it is sufficient that it will come in God's time, and we are sure that that is the best time. The promise is, that God will visit them in

mercy; though he had long seemed to be strange to them, he will come among them, and appear for them, and put honour upon them, as great men do upon their inferiors, by coming to visit them. He will put an end to *their captivity*, and *turn away* all the calamities of it. Though they are *dispersed*, some in one country, and some in another, he will *gather them from all the places whither they are driven*, will set up a standard for them all to resort to, and incorporate them again in one body. And though they are at a great distance, they shall be brought again to their own land, to the place whence they were *carried captive*, v. 14.

Now, 1. This shall be the performance of God's promise to them; (v. 10.) *I will perform my good word toward you*. Let not the failing of those predictions which are delivered as from God, lessen the reputation of those that really are from him. That which is indeed God's word, is a *good word*, and therefore it will be made good, and not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground. *Hath he said, and shall he not do it?* This will make their return out of captivity very comfortable, that it will be the performance of God's *good word* to them, the product of a gracious promise.

2. This shall be in pursuance of God's purposes concerning them: (v. 11.) *I know the thoughts that I think toward you*. Known unto God are all his works, for known unto him are all his thoughts, (Acts xv. 18.) and his works agree exactly with his thoughts; he *doeth all according to the counsel of his will*. We often do not know our own thoughts, not know our own mind, but God is never at any uncertainty within himself. We are sometimes ready to fear that God's designs concerning us are all against us; but he knows the contrary concerning his own people, that they are *thoughts of good, and not of evil*; even that which seems evil, is designed for good. His thoughts are all working toward the expected end, which he will give in due time. The end they expect will come, though perhaps not when they expect it. Let them have patience till the fruit is ripe, and then they shall have it. He will give them *an end, and expectation*; so it is in the original. (1.) He will give them to see the *end*, the comfortable period, of their trouble; though it last long, it shall not last always; the *time to favour Zion*, yea, the *set time, will come*; when things are at the worst, they will begin to mend; and he will give them to see the glorious perfection of their deliverance; for, as for God, his work is perfect. He that in the beginning finished the *heavens and the earth*, and all the *hosts* of both, will finish all the blessings of both to his people. When he begins in ways of mercy, he will *make an end*. God does nothing by halves. (2.) He will give them to see the *expectation*, that *end* which they desire and hope for, and have been long waiting for. He will give them, not the expectations of their fears, or the expectations of their fancies, but the expectations of their faith; the *end* which he has promised, and which will turn for the best to them.

3. This shall be in answer to their prayers and supplications to God, v. 12.—14. (1.) God will stir them up to pray; *Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go, and pray unto me*. Note, When God is about to give his people the expected good, he pours out a *spirit of prayer*, and it is a good sign that he is coming toward them in mercy. Then when you see the *expected end* approaching, *then you shall call upon me*. Note, Promises are given, not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, prayer; and when deliverance is coming, we must by prayer go forth to meet it. When Daniel understood that the 70 years were near expiring, then he *set his face* with more fervency than ever to *seek the Lord*, Dan. ix. 2, 3. (2.) He will then stir up

himself to come and save them, (Ps. lxxx. 2.) *I will hearken unto you, and I will be found of you*. God has said it, and we may depend upon it; *seek, and ye shall find*. We have a general rule laid down, (v. 13.) *Ye shall find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart*. In seeking God, we must search for him, accomplish a diligent search, search for directions in seeking him, and encouragements to our faith and hope. We must continue seeking, and take pains in seeking, as those that search; and this we must do with our *heart*, in sincerity and uprightness, and with our *whole heart*, with vigour and fervency, putting forth *all that is within us*, in prayer; those who thus *seek God*, shall *find him*, and shall find him their bountiful Rewarder, Heb. xi. 6. He never said to such, *Seek ye me in vain*.

15. Because ye have said, The LORD hath raised us up prophets in Babylon; 16. *Know that thus saith the LORD of the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and of all the people that dwelleth in this city, and of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity*; 17. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. 18. And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and a hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them: 19. Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the LORD. 20. Hear ye, therefore, the word of the LORD, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon: 21. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name, Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall slay them before your eyes; 22. And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The LORD make thee like Zedekiah, and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire; 23. Because they have committed villany in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and am a witness, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah, having given great encouragement to those among the captives whom he knew to be serious and well-affected, assuring them that God had very kind and favourable intentions concerning them, here turns to those among them who slighted

the counsels and comforts that Jeremiah ministered to them, and depended upon what the false prophets flattered them with. When this letter came from Jeremiah, they would be ready to say, "Why should he make himself so busy, and take upon him to advise us? *The Lord has raised us up prophets in Babylon*, v. 15. We are satisfied with those prophets, and can depend upon them, and have no occasion to hear from any prophets in Jerusalem." See the impudent wickedness of this people; as the prophets, when they prophesied lies, said that they had them from God, so the people, when they invited those prophets thus to flatter them, fathered it upon God, and said that it was the Lord that raised them up those prophets. Whereas we may be sure that those who harden people in their sins, and deceive them with false and groundless hopes of God's mercy, are no prophets of God's raising up. These prophets of their own told them that no more should be carried captive, but that those who were in captivity should shortly return. Now, in answer to this,

1. The prophet here foretells the utter destruction of those who remained still at Jerusalem, notwithstanding what those false prophets said to the contrary; "As for the *king and people that dwell in the city*, who, you think, will be ready to bid you welcome when you return, you are deceived, they shall be followed with one judgment after another, *sword, famine, and pestilence*, which shall cut off multitudes; and the poor and miserable remains shall be *removed into all kingdoms of the earth*," v. 16.—18. And thus God *will make them*, or rather deal with them, *like vile figs*; they have made themselves so by their wickedness, and God will use them accordingly; as the salt that has *lost its savour*, which, being good for nothing, is cast to the dung-hill; and so are rotten figs. This refers to the vision, and the prophecy upon it, which we had, *ch. xxiv*. And the reason given for these proceedings against them, is the same that has often been given, and will justify God in the eternal ruin of impenitent sinners, (v. 19.) *Because they have not hearkened to my words; I called, but they refused*.

2. He foretells the judgment of God upon the false prophets in Babylon, who deceived the people of God there. He calls upon all the children of the captivity, who boasted of them as prophets of God's raising up; (v. 20.) "Stand still, and hear the doom of the prophets you are so fond of." The two prophets are named here *Ahab and Zedekiah*, v. 21. Observe, (1.) The crimes charged upon them—impiety and immorality; *They prophesied lies in God's name*, (v. 21.) and again, (v. 23.) *They have spoken lying words in my name*. Lying was bad, lying to the people of God to delude them into a false hope was worse, but fathering their lies upon the God of truth was worst of all. And no marvel if they that had the face to do that, could allow themselves in the gratification of those vile affections to which God, in a way of righteous judgment, *gave them up*. They have *done villany in Israel*, for they have committed *adultery with their neighbours' wives*. Adultery is villany, and it is an aggravation of it, if it be villany in Israel, and in such as pretend to be prophets, who by such wickedness manifestly disprove their own pretensions. God never sent such profligate wretches on his errands. He is the *Lord God of the holy prophets*, not of such impure ones. Here it appears why they flattered others in their sins—because they could not reprove them without condemning themselves. These lewd practices of theirs they knew how to conceal from the eye of the world, that they might preserve their credit; but *I know it, and am a Witness, saith the Lord*. The most secret sins are known to God; he can see the villany that is covered with

the thickest cloak of hypocrisy, and there is a day coming when he will bring to light all these hidden works of darkness, and every man will appear in his own colours. (2.) The judgments threatened against them; *The king of Babylon shall slay them before your eyes*; nay, he shall put them to a miserable death, *roast them in the fire*, v. 22. We may suppose that it was not for their impiety and immorality that Nebuchadnezzar punished them thus severely, but for sedition, and some attempts of their turbulent spirits upon the public peace, and stirring up the people to revolt and rebel. So much of their wickedness shall then be detected, and in such a wretched manner they shall end their days, that their names shall be a curse among the captives in Babylon, v. 22. When men would imprecate the greatest evil upon one they hated, they would think they could not load them with a heavier curse, in fewer words, than to say, *The Lord make thee like Zedekiah, and like Ahab*! Thus were they made ashamed of the prophets they had been proud of, and convinced at least of their folly in hearkening to them. God's faithful prophets were sometimes charged with being the troublers of the land, and, as such, were tortured and slain; but their names were a blessing when they were gone, and their memory sweet, not as these here. As malefactors are attended with infamy and disgrace, so martyrs with glory and honour.

24. Thus shalt thou also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying, 25. Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, and to all the priests, saying, 26. The LORD hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the LORD, for every man that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldest put him in prison, and in the stocks: 27. Now, therefore, why hast thou not reprov'd Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you? 28. For therefore he sent unto us in Babylon, saying, This captivity is long: build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. 29. And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet. 30. Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, 31. Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie; 32. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the LORD; because he hath taught rebellion against the LORD.

We have perused the contents of Jeremiah's letter to the captives in Babylon, who had reason, with a

great deal of thanks to God and him, to acknowledge the receipt of it, and lay it up among their treasures. But we cannot wonder if the false prophets they had among them were enraged at it, for it gave them their true character. Now here we are told concerning one of them,

1. How he discovers his malice against Jeremiah. This busy fellow is called *Shemaiah the Nehelamite*; the *dreamer*, (so the margin reads it,) because all his prophecies he pretended to have received from God in a dream. He had got a copy of Jeremiah's letter to the captives, or had heard it read, or information was given to him concerning it, and it nettled him exceedingly; and he will take pen in hand, and answer it, yea, that he will. But how? He does not write to Jeremiah in justification of his own mission, nor offer any rational arguments for the support of his prophecies concerning the speedy return of the captives; but he writes to the priests, those faithful patrons of the false prophets, and instigates them to persecute Jeremiah. He writes in his own name, not so much as pretending to have the people's consent to it, but, as if he must be dictator to all mankind, he sends a circular letter (as it should seem) among the priests at Jerusalem, and the rest of the people, probably by the same messengers that brought the letter from Jeremiah. But it is chiefly directed to Zephaniah, who was either the immediate son of Maaseiah, or of the twenty-fourth course of the priests, of which Maaseiah was the father and head. He was not the High Priest, but sagan or suffragan to the High Priest, or in some other considerable post of command in the temple, as Pashur, *ch. xx. 1*. Perhaps he was chairman of that committee of priests that was appointed in a particular manner to take cognizance of those that pretended to be prophets, of which there were very many at this time, and to give judgment concerning them. Now,

1. He puts him and the other priests in mind of the duty of their place; (*v. 26.*) *The Lord hath made thee priest instead of Jehoiada the priest*. Some think that he refers to the famous Jehoiada, that great reformer in the days of Joash; and (says Mr. Gataker) he would insinuate that this Zephaniah is for spirit and zeal such another as he, and raised up, as he was, for the glory of God and the good of the church; and therefore it was expected from him that he should proceed against Jeremiah. Thus (says he) there is no act so injurious or impious, but that wicked wretches and false prophets will not only attempt it, but colour it also with some specious pretence of piety, and zeal for God's glory, *Isa. lxvi. 5*. *John xvi. 2*. Or, rather, it was some other Jehoiada, his immediate predecessor in this office, who perhaps was carried to Babylon among the priests, *v. 1*. Zephaniah is advanced, sooner than he expected, to this place of trust and power, and Shemaiah would have him think that Providence had preferred him, that he might persecute God's prophets, that he was come to this government for such a time as this, and that he was unjust and ungrateful, if he did not thus improve his power, or, rather, abuse it. Their hearts are wretchedly hard, who can justify the doing of mischief by their having a power to do it. These priests' business was to examine *every man that is mad, and makes himself a prophet*. God's faithful prophets are here represented as prophets of their own making, usurpers of the office, and lay-intruders; and as men that were mad, actuated by some demon, and not divinely inspired; or as distracted men, and men in a frenzy. Thus the characters of the false prophets are thrown upon the true ones; if this had been indeed their character, they ought to be bound as madmen and punished as pretenders, and therefore he concludes that Jeremiah must be

so done to. He does not bid them examine whether Jeremiah could produce any proofs of his mission, and could make it to appear that he was not mad; no, that is taken for granted, and when once he has had a bad name given him, he must be run down of course.

2. He informs them of the letter which Jeremiah had written to the captives; (*v. 28.*) He *sent unto us in Babylon*, with the authority of a prophet, saying, *This captivity is long*, and therefore resolve to make the best of it. And what harm was there in this, that it should be objected to him as a crime? The false prophets had formerly said that the captivity would never come, *ch. xiv. 13*. Jeremiah had said that it would come, and the event had already proved him in the right, which obliged them to give credit to him, who now said that it would be long, rather than to them who said it would be short, but had once before been found liars.

3. He demands judgment against him; taking it for granted that he is *mad*, and *makes himself a prophet*. He expects that they will order him to be put in prison, and in the stocks, (*v. 26.*) that they will thus punish him, and by putting him to disgrace possess the people with prejudices against him, ruin his reputation, and so prevent the giving of any credit to his prophecies at Jerusalem, hoping that if they could gain that point, the captives in Babylon would not be influenced by him. Nay, he takes upon him to chide Zephaniah for his neglect. (*v. 27.*) *Why hast thou not rebuked and restrained Jeremiah of Anathoth?* See how insolent and imperious these false prophets were grown, that though they were in captivity, they would give law to the priests, who were not only at liberty but in power. It is common for those that pretend to more knowledge than their neighbours, to be thus assuming. Now here is a remarkable instance of the hardness of the hearts of sinners, and it is enough to make us all fear, *lest our hearts be at any time hardened*. For here we find, (1.) That these sinners would not be convinced by the clearest evidence. God had confirmed his word in the mouth of Jeremiah, it had *taken hold* of them; (*Zech. i. 6.*) and yet, because he does not prophesy to them the *smooth things* they desired, they are resolved to look upon him as not duly called to the office of a prophet. None so blind as those that will not see. (2.) That they would not be reclaimed and reformed by the most severe chastisement. They were now sent into a miserable thrall for *mocking the messengers of the Lord, and misusing his prophets*; this was the sin for which God now contended with them; and yet in their distress they *trespass yet more against the Lord*, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. This very sin they are notoriously guilty of in their captivity, which shows that afflictions will not of themselves cure men of their sins, unless the grace of God work with them, but will rather exasperate the corruptions they are intended to mortify; so true is that adage of Solomon, (*Prov. xxvii. 22.*) *Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him*.

II. How Jeremiah came to the knowledge of this; (*v. 29.*) *Zephaniah read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah*. He did not design to do as Shemaiah would have him, but, as it should seem, had a respect for Jeremiah, (for we find him employed in messages to him as a *prophet, ch. xxi. 1*.—xxxvii. 3.) and therefore protected him. He that continued in his dignity and power, stood more in awe of God and his judgments than he that was now a captive. Nay, he made Jeremiah acquainted with the contents of the latter, that he might see what enemies he had even among the captives. Note, It is kindness to our friends, to let them know their foes.

III. What was the sentence passed upon She-

marah for writing this letter. God sent him an answer, for to him Jeremiah committed his cause: it was ordered to be sent not to him, but to *them of the captivity*, who encouraged and countenanced him, as if he had been a prophet of God's raising up, v. 31, 32. Let them know,

1. That Shemaiah had made fools of them; he promised them peace in God's name, but God did not send him, he forged a commission, and counterfeited the broad seal of Heaven to it, and made the people to *trust in a lie*, and by preaching false comfort to them deprived them of true comfort; nay, he had not only made fools of them, but, which was worse, had made traitors of them, he had *taught rebellion against the Lord*, as Hanaiah had done, *ch. xxviii. 16.* And if vengeance shall be taken on them that rebel, much more on them that teach rebellion by their doctrine and example.

2. That at his end *he shall also be a fool*; (as the expression is, *ch. xvii. 11.*) his name and family shall be extinct, and shall be buried in oblivion; he shall leave no issue behind him to bear up his name, his pedigree shall end in him; *he shall not have a man to dwell among this people*, and neither he, nor any that come from him, shall *behold the good that I will do for my people*. Note, Those are unworthy to share in God's favours to his church, that are not willing to stay his time for them. Shemaiah was angry at Jeremiah's advice to the captives, to see to the building up of their families in Babylon, that they might be *increased*, and not *diminished*, and therefore justly is he written childless there. Those that slight the blessings of God's word, deserve to lose the benefit of them. See Amos vii. 16, 17.

CHAP. XXX.

The sermon which we have in this and the following chapter, is of a very different complexion from all those before. The prophet does indeed, by direction from God, change his voice. Most of what he had said hitherto, was by way of reproof and threatening; but these two chapters are wholly taken up with precious promises of a return out of captivity, and that typical of the glorious things reserved for the church in the days of the Messiah. The prophet is bid not only to *preach* this, but to *write* it, because it is intended for the comfort of the generation to come, v. 1. 3. It is here promised, I. That they should hereafter have a joyful restoration. 1. Though they were now in a great deal of pain and terror, v. 4. 7. 2. Though their oppressors were very strong, v. 8. 10. 3. Though a full end was made of other nations, and they were not restored, v. 11. 4. Though all means of their deliverance seemed to fail and be cut off, v. 12. 14. 5. Though God himself had sent them into captivity, and justly, for their sins, v. 15, 16. 6. Though all about them looked upon their case as desperate, v. 17. II. That after their joyful restoration they should have a happy settlement; that their city should be rebuilt, (v. 18.) their numbers increased, (v. 19, 20.) their government established, (v. 21.) God's covenant with them renewed, (v. 22.) and their enemies destroyed and cut off, v. 23, 24.

1. **T**HE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2. Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book. 3. For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. 4. And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel, and concerning Judah. 5. For thus

saith the LORD, We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. 6. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? 7. Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. 8. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: 9. But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

Here,

I. Jeremiah is directed to *write* what God had spoken to him; which perhaps refers to all the foregoing prophecies; he must write them and publish them, in hopes that they who had not profited by it upon once hearing it, might take more notice of it when, in reading it, they had leisure for a more considerate review. Or, rather, it refers to the promises of their enlargement, which had been of ten mixed with his other discourses. He must collect them and put them together, and God will now add unto them many like words. He must write them for the generations to come, who should see them accomplished, and thereby have their faith in the prophecy confirmed. He must write it not *in a letter*, as that in the chapter before, to the captives, but *in a book*, to be carefully preserved in the archives, or among the public rolls or registers of the state. Daniel understood by these books when the captivity was about coming to an end, Dan. ix. 2. He must write it in a book, not in loose papers; For *the days come*, and are yet at a great distance, when *I will bring again the captivity of Israel and Judah*, great numbers of the ten tribes, with those of the two, v. 3. And it must be written, that it may be read then also, that so it may appear how exactly the accomplishment answers the prediction, which is one end of the writing of prophecies. It is intimated that they shall be *beloved for their fathers' sake*; (Rom. xi. 28.) for *therefore* God will bring them again to Canaan, because it was the land that *he gave to their fathers*, which therefore they shall possess.

II. He is directed *what to write*. The very words are such as the Holy Ghost teaches, v. 4. These are the words which God ordered to be written; and those promises which are written by his order, are as truly his word as the ten commandments, which were written with his finger.

1. He must write a description of the fright and consternation which the people were now in, and were likely to be still in upon every attack that the *Chaldeans* made upon them, which will much magnify both the wonder and the welcomeness of their deliverance; (v. 5.) *We have heard a voice of trembling*—the shrieks of terror echoing to the alarms of danger. The false prophets told them that they should have *peace*, but *there is fear, and not peace*; so the margin reads it. No marvel that when *without are fightings, within are fears*. The men, even the men of war, shall be quite overwhelmed with the calamities of their nation, shall sink under them, and yield to them, and shall look like *women in labour*, whose pains come upon them in great extremity, and they know that they cannot escape them, v. 6. You never heard of a man tra-

vailling with child, and yet here you find not here and there a timorous man, but *every man, with his hands on his loins*, in the utmost anguish and agony, as *women in travail*, when they see their cities burnt and their countries laid waste. But this pain is compared to that of a *woman in travail*, not to that of a death-bed, because it shall end in joy at last, and the pain, like that of a *travailing woman*, shall be forgotten. *All faces shall be turned into paleness*. The word signifies not only such paleness as arises from a sudden fright, but that which is the effect of a bad habit of body, the jaundice, or green sickness. The prophet laments the calamity, upon the foresight of it; (*v. 7.*) *Alas, for that day is great*, a day of judgment, which is called the *great day*, the *great and terrible day of the Lord*; (Joel ii. 31. Jude 6.) great, so that *there has been none like it*. The last destruction of Jerusalem is thus spoken of by our Saviour as unparalleled, Matth. xxiv. 21. *It is even the time of Jacob's trouble*, a sad time, when God's professing people shall be in distress, above other people. The whole time of the captivity was a *time of Jacob's trouble*; and such times ought to be greatly lamented by all that are concerned for the welfare of Jacob, and the honour of the God of Jacob.

2. He must write the assurances which God had given, that a happy end should at length be put to these calamities, (1.) Jacob's troubles shall cease; *He shall be saved out of them*. Though the afflictions of the church may last long, they shall not last always. *Salvation belongs to the Lord*, and shall be wrought for his church. (2.) Jacob's troublers shall be disabled to do him any further mischief, and shall be reckoned with for the mischief they have done him, *v. 1.* *The Lord of hosts, who has all power in his hand, undertakes to do it; "I will break his yoke from off thy neck, which has long lain so heavy, and hath so sorely galled thee; I will burst thy bonds and restore thee to liberty and ease, and thou shalt no more be at the beck and command of strangers, shalt no more serve them, nor shall they any more serve themselves of thee, they shall no more enrich themselves either by thy possessions or by thy labours."* And, (3.) That which crowns and completes the mercy is, that they shall be restored to the free exercise of their religion again, *v. 9.* They shall be delivered from serving their enemies, not that they may live at large, and do what they please, but that they may *serve the Lord their God and David their king*, that they may come again in order, under the established government both in church and state. *Therefore they are brought into trouble and made to serve their enemies*, because they had not *served the Lord their God* as they ought to have done, *with joyfulness and gladness of heart*, Deut. xxviii. 47. But when the time is come that they should be *saved out of their trouble*, God will prepare and qualify them for it, by giving them a *heart to serve him*; and will make it doubly comfortable, by giving them opportunity to serve him. *Therefore we are delivered out of the hands of our enemies*, that we may *serve God*, Luke i. 74, 75. And then deliverances out of temporal calamities are mercies indeed to us, when by them we find ourselves engaged to, and enlarged in, the service of God. They shall serve their own God, and neither be inclined, as they had been of old in the day of their apostacy, nor compelled, as they had been of late in the day of their captivity, to serve other gods. They shall serve *David their king*, such governors as God should from time to time set over them, of the line of David, as Zerubbabel; or, at least, sitting on the *thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David*, as Nehemiah. But certainly this has a further meaning. The Chaldee Paraphrase reads it, *They shall obey,*

or hearken to, the Messiah, or Christ, the Son of David, their king. To him the Jewish interpreters apply it. That dispensation, which commenced at their return out of captivity, brought them to the Messiah. He is called *David their king*, because he was the *Son of David*, (Matth. xxii. 42.) and he answered to the name. Matth. xx. 31, 32. David was an illustrious type of him both in his humiliation and his exaltation. The covenant of royalty made with David had principal reference to him, and in him the promises of that covenant had their full accomplishment. God gave him the *throne of his father David*, he *raised him up unto them, set him upon the holy hill of Zion*. God is often in the New Testament said to have *raised up Jesus*, raised him up as a King, Acts iii. 26.—xiii. 23, 33. Observe, [1.] Those that serve the Lord as their God, must also serve *David their King*, must give up themselves to Jesus Christ, to be ruled by him. For all men must honour the Son as they honour the Father, and come into the service and worship of God by him as Mediator. [2.] Those that are delivered out of spiritual bondage, must make it appear that they are so by giving up themselves to the service of Christ. They to whom he gives rest, must take his yoke upon them.

10. Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. 11. For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished. 12. For thus saith the LORD, Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous. 13. There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines. 14. All thy lovers have forgotten thee; they seek thee not: for I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased. 15. Why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: because thy sins were increased I have done these things unto thee. 16. Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey. 17. For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after.

In these verses, as in those foregoing, the deplorable case of the Jews in captivity is set forth, but many precious promises are given them, that in due time they should be relieved, and a glorious salvation wrought for them.

1. God himself appeared against them; he scattered them; (v. 11.) he did *all these things unto them*, v. 15. All their calamities came from his hands; whoever were the instruments, he was the principal Agent. And this made their case very sad, that God, even their own God, spake concerning them, to pull down and to destroy. Now, (1.) This was intended by him as a fatherly chastisement, and no other; (v. 11.) "*I will correct thee in measure, or according to judgment*, with discretion, no more than thou deservest, nay, no more than thou canst well bear." What God does against his people, is in a way of correction, and that correction is always moderated, and always proceeds from love. "*I will not leave thee altogether unpunished*, as thou art ready to think I should, because of thy relation to me." Note, A profession of religion, though ever so plausible, will be far from securing to us impunity in sin. God is no Respector of persons, but will show his hatred of sin, wherever he finds it, and that he hates it most in those that are nearest to him. God here corrects his people *for the multitude of their iniquity, and because their sins were increased*, v. 14, 15. Are our sorrows multiplied at any time, and do they increase? We must acknowledge that it is because our sins have been multiplied, and they have increased. Iniquities grow in us, and therefore troubles grow upon us. But, (2.) What God intended as a fatherly chastisement, they and others interpreted as an act of hostility; they looked upon him as having *wounded them with the wound of an enemy, and with the chastisement of a cruel one*, (v. 14.) as if he had designed their ruin, and neither mitigated the correction, nor had any mercy in reserve for them. It did indeed seem as if God had dealt thus severely with them, as if he had turned to be their Enemy, and had fought against them, Isa. lxiii. 10. Job complains that God was become cruel to him, and *multiplied his wounds*. When troubles are great and long, we have need carefully to watch over our own hearts, that we entertain not such hard thoughts as these of God and his providence. His are the chastisements of a merciful one, not of a cruel one, however they may appear.

2. Their friends forsook them, and were shy of them; none of those who had courted them in their prosperity, would take notice of them now in their distress, v. 13. It is commonly thus when families go to decay; those hang off from them, that had been their hangers-on. In two cases we are glad of the assistance of our friends, and need their service; (1.) If we be impeached, accused, or reproached, we expect that our friends should appear in vindication of us, should speak a good word for us, when we cannot put on a face to speak for ourselves; but here *there is none to plead thy cause*, none to stand up in thy defence, none to intercede for thee with thine oppressors: therefore God will *plead thy cause*, for he might well wonder there was none to uphold a people that had been so much the favourites of heaven, Isa. lxiii. 5. (2.) If we be sick, or sore, or wounded, we expect our friends should attend us, advise us, sympathize with us, and, if occasion be, lend a hand for the applying of *healing medicines*; but here, there is none to do that, none to bind up thy wounds, and by counsels and comforts to make proper applications to thy case; nay, (v. 14.) *All thy lovers have forgotten thee*; out of sight out of mind; instead of seeking thee they forsake thee. Such as this has often been the case of religion and serious godliness in the world; those, that from their education, profession, and hopeful beginnings, one might have expected to have been its friends and lovers, its patrons and protectors, desert it, forget it, and have nothing to say in its defence,

nor will do any thing toward the healing of its wounds. Observe, *Thy lovers have forgotten thee, for I have wounded thee*. When God is against a people, who will be for them? Who can be for them, so as to do them any kindness? See Job xxx. 11. Now, upon this account, their case seemed desperate and past relief; (v. 12.) *Thy bruise is incurable, thy wound grievous*, and (v. 15.) *thy sorrow is incurable*; the condition of the Jews in captivity was such as no human power could redress the grievances of; there they were like a valley full of *dead and dry bones*, which nothing less than Omnipotence can put life into. Who could imagine that a people so diminished, so impoverished, should ever be restored to their own land, and re-established there? So many were the aggravations of their calamity, that their sorrow would not admit of any alleviation, but they seemed to be hardened in it, and their souls refused to be comforted, till divine consolations proved strong ones, too strong to be borne down even by the floods of grief that overwhelmed them. *Thy sorrow is incurable, because thy sins*, instead of being repented of and forsaken, *were increased*. Note, Incurable griefs are owing to incurable lusts. Now in this deplorable condition they are looked upon with disdain; (v. 17.) *They called thee an outcast*, abandoned by all, abandoned to ruin; they said, *This is Zion, whom no man seeks after*. When they looked on the place where the city and temple had been built, they called that *an outcast*; now all was in ruins, there was no resort to it, no residence in it, none asked the way to Zion, as formerly, *no man seeks after it*. When they looked on the people that formerly dwelt in Zion, but were now in captivity, (and we read of *Zion dwelling with the daughter of Babylon*, Zech. ii. 7.) they called them *outcasts*; these are they who belong to Zion, and talk much of it, and weep at the remembrance of it, but *no man seeks after them*, or inquires concerning them. Note, It is often the lot of Zion to be deserted and despised by those about her.

3. For all this, God will work deliverance and salvation for them in due time. Though no other hand, nay, *because* no other hand, can cure their wound, his will and shall. (1.) Though he seemed to stand at a distance from them, yet he assures them of his presence with them, his powerful and gracious presence; *I will save thee*, v. 10. *I am with thee, to save thee*; v. 11. When they are in their troubles, he is with them, to save them from sinking under them; when the time is come for their deliverance, he is with them, to be ready upon the first opportunity, to save them out of their trouble. (2.) Though they were at a distance, remote from their own land, *afar off in the land of their captivity*, yet there shall salvation find them out, thence shall it fetch them, them and their seed, for they also shall be known among the Gentiles, and distinguished from them, that they may *return*, v. 10. (3.) Though they were now full of fears, and continually alarmed, yet the time shall come when they *shall be in rest and quiet*, safe and easy, and *none shall make them afraid*, v. 10. (4.) Though the nations into which they were dispersed, should be brought to ruin, yet they should be preserved from that ruin; (v. 11.) *Though I make a full end of the nations whither I have scattered thee*, and there might be danger of thy being lost among them, yet *I will not make a full end of thee*. It was promised that in the peace of these nations they should *have peace*; (ch. xxix. 7.) and yet in the destruction of these nations they should escape destruction. God's church may sometimes be brought very low, but he *will not make a full end of it*, ch. v. 10, 18. (5.) Though God correct them, and justly, for their sins, their manifold transgres-

sions and mighty sins, yet he will return in mercy to them, and even their sin shall not prevent their deliverance when God's time is come. (6.) Though their adversaries were mighty, God will bring them down, and break their power; (*v. 16.*) *All that devour thee shall be devoured*, and thus Zion's cause will be pleaded, and will be made to appear to all the world a righteous cause. Thus Zion's deliverance will be brought about by the destruction of her oppressors; and thus her enemies will be recompensed for all the injury they have done her; for *there is a God that judges in the earth, a God to whom vengeance belongs; they shall every one of them, without exception, go into captivity*, and the day will come when *they that now spoil thee, shall be a spoil*; they that *lead into captivity, shall go into captivity*, Rev. xiii. 10. This might serve to oblige the present conquerors to use their captives well, because the wheel would turn round, and the day would come when they also should be captives, and let them do now as they would then be done by. (7.) Though the wound would seem incurable, God will make a cure of it; (*v. 17.*) *I will restore health unto thee*. Be the disease ever so dangerous, the patient is safe if God undertake the cure.

4. Upon the whole matter, they are cautioned against inordinate fear and grief, for in these precious promises there is enough to silence both. (1.) They must not tremble as those that have no hope, in the apprehension of future further trouble that might threaten them; (*v. 10.*) *Fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, neither be dismayed*. Note, Those that are God's servants must not give way to disquieting fears, whatever difficulties and dangers may be before them. (2.) They must not sorrow as those that have no hope, for the troubles which at present they lie under, *v. 15.* "*Why criest thou for thine affliction?*" It is true, thy carnal confidences fail thee, creatures are physicians of no value, but *I will heal thy wound*, and therefore, *Why criest thou?* Why dost thou fret and complain thus? It is for *thy sin*, (*v. 14, 15.*) and therefore, instead of repining, thou shouldst be repenting. *Wherefore should a man complain for the punishment of his sins?* The issue will be good at last, and therefore *rejoice in hope*."

13. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-places; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. 19. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. 20. Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them. 21. And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the LORD. 22. And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. 23. Behold, the whirlwind of the LORD goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind; it shall fall

with pain upon the head of the wicked. 24. The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it.

We have here further intimations of the favour God had in reserve for them after the days of their calamity were over. It is promised,

1. That the city and temple should be rebuilt, (*v. 18.*) *Jacob's tents*, and *his dwelling-places*, felt the effects of the *captivity*, for they lay in ruins when the inhabitants were carried away captives; but when they are returned, the habitations shall be repaired, and raised up out of their ruins, and therein God will *have mercy upon their dwelling-places*, that had been monuments of his justice. Then *the city of Jerusalem shall be built upon her own heap*, her own hill, though now it be no better than a *ruinous heap*. The situation was unexceptionable, and therefore it shall be rebuilt upon the same spot of ground. He that can *make of a city a heap*, (*Isa. xxv. 2.*) can, when he pleases, *make of a heap a city* again. *The palace, the temple, God's palace shall remain after the manner thereof*, it shall be built after the old model; and the service of God shall be constantly kept up there, and attended as formerly.

2. That the sacred feasts should again be solemnized; (*v. 19.*) *Out of the city, and the temple, and all the dwelling-places of Jacob, shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry*. They shall go with expressions of joy to the temple-service, and with the like shall return from it. Observe, The voice of *thanksgiving* is the same with the *voice of them that make merry*; for whatever is the matter of our joy, should be the matter of our praise. *Is any merry? Let him sing psalms*. What makes us cheerful should make us thankful. *Serve the Lord with gladness*.

3. That the people should be multiplied and increased, and made considerable; *They shall not be few, they shall not be small*, but shall become numerous and illustrious, and make a figure among the nations; *for I will multiply them and I will glorify them*. It is for the honour of the church to have many added to it, that shall be saved; this would make them to be of some weight among their neighbours. Let a people be ever so much diminished and despised, God can multiply and glorify them. They shall be restored to their former honour, *their children shall be as aforetime*, playing in the streets; (*Zech. viii. 5.*) they shall inherit their parents' estates and honours as formerly, *and their congregations shall, both in civil and sacred things, be established before me*. There shall be a constant succession of faithful magistrates in the congregation of the elders, to establish that, and of faithful worshippers in the congregation of the saints. As one generation passes away, another shall be raised up, and so the *congregation shall be established before God*.

4. That they shall be blessed with a good government; (*v. 21.*) *Their nobles and judges shall be of themselves*, of their own nation, and they shall no longer be ruled by strangers and enemies; *their governor shall proceed from the midst of them*, shall be one that has been a sharer with them in the afflictions of their captive state; and this has reference to Christ our Governor, *David our King*; (*v. 9.*) he is of ourselves, in all things made like unto his brethren. *And I will cause them to draw near*: this may be understood, either, (1.) Of the people, Jacob and Israel; "*I will cause them to draw near to me in the temple-service, as formerly, to come into covenant with me, as my people*, (*v. 22.*) *to approach to me in communion; for, who hath engaged*

his heart, made a covenant with it, and brought it into bonds, *to approach unto me?*" How few are there that do so! None can do it but by the special grace of God, *causing them to draw near*. Note, Whenever we approach to God in any holy ordinance, we must engage our hearts to do it; the heart must be prepared for the duty, employed in it, and kept close to it. The heart is the main thing that God looks at and requires; but it is deceitful, and will start aside, if a great deal of care and pains be not taken to engage it to bind this *sacrifice with cords*. Or, (2.) It may be understood of the governor, for it is a single person that is spoken of; *their governor shall be duly called to his office, shall draw near to God to consult him upon all occasions*. God will cause him to approach to him, for otherwise, who would engage to take care of so weak a people, and let this ruin come under their hand? But when God has work to do, though attended with many discouragements, he will raise up instruments to do it. But it looks further, to Christ, to him as Mediator. Note, [1.] The proper work and office of Christ, as Mediator, is *to draw near and approach unto God*, not for himself only, but for us, and in our name and stead, as the High Priest of our profession. The priests are said to draw nigh to God, Lev. x. 3.—xxi. 17. *Moses drew near*, Exod. xx. 21. [2.] God the Father did cause Jesus Christ thus to draw near and approach to him as Mediator. He commanded and appointed him to do it, he sanctified and sealed him, anointed him for this purpose, and accepted of him, and declared himself well-pleased in him. [3.] Jesus Christ, being caused by the Father to approach unto him as Mediator, did engage his heart to do it, he bound and obliged himself to it, *undertook for his heart*, (so some read it,) for his soul, that, in the fulness of time, it should be made an offering for sin. His own voluntary susception, in compliance with his Father's will, and in compassion to fallen man, engaged him, and then his own honour kept him to it. It also intimates that he was hearty and resolute, free and cheerful, in it, and made nothing of the difficulties that lay in his way, Isa. lxiii. 3.—5. [4.] Jesus Christ was, in all this, truly wonderful; we may well ask, with admiration, *Who is this that thus engages his heart to such an undertaking?* 5. That they shall be taken again into covenant with God, according to the covenant made with their fathers; (v. 22.) *Ye shall be my people*; and it is God's good work in us, that makes us to him a people, a people for his name, Acts xv. 14. *I will be your God*; it is his good-will to us, that is the summary of that part of the covenant.

6. That their enemies shall be reckoned with and brought down; (v. 20.) *I will punish all them that oppress them*, so that it shall appear to all a dangerous thing to touch God's anointed, Ps. cv. 15. The two last verses come under this head, *The whirlwind of the Lord shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked*. These two verses we had before: (ch. xxiii. 19, 20.) *there they were a denunciation of God's wrath against the wicked hypocrites in Israel; here, against the wicked oppressors of Israel*; the expressions, exactly agreeing, speak the same with that, (Isa. li. 22, 23.) *I will take the cup of trembling out of thy hand, and put it into the hand of them that afflict thee*. The wrath of God against the wicked is here represented to be, (1.) Very terrible, like a whirlwind, surprising and irresistible. (2.) Very grievous; it shall fall with pain upon their heads, they shall be as much hurt as frightened. (3.) It shall pursue them; whirlwinds are usually short, but this shall be a continuing whirlwind. (4.) It shall accomplish that for which it is sent; *The anger of the Lord shall not return, till he have done it*; the purposes of his wrath, as

well as the purposes of his love, will all be fulfilled; he will perform the intents of his heart: and, (5.) Those that will not lay this to heart now, will then be unable to put off the thoughts of it; *In the latter days ye shall consider it*, when it will be too late to prevent it.

CHAP. XXXI.

This chapter goes on with the good words and comfortable words which we had in the chapter before, for the encouragement of the captives, assuring them that God would in due time return them or their children to their own land, and make them a great and happy nation again, especially by sending them the Messiah, in whose kingdom and grace many of these promises were to have their full accomplishment. I. They shall be restored to peace and honour, and joy and great plenty, v. 1.—14. II. Their sorrow for the loss of their children shall be at an end, v. 15.—17. III. They shall repent of their sins, and God will graciously accept them in their repentance, v. 18.—20. IV. They shall be multiplied and increased, both their children and their cattle, and not be cut off and diminished as they had been, v. 21.—30. V. God will renew his covenant with them, and enrich it with spiritual blessings, v. 31.—34. VI. These blessings shall be secured to theirs after them, even to the spiritual seed of Israel for ever, v. 35.—37. VII. As an earnest of this, the city of Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, v. 38.—40. These exceeding great and precious promises were firm foundations of hope, and full foundations of joy, to the poor captives; and we also may apply them to ourselves, and mix faith with them.

I. **A**T the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. 2. Thus saith the LORD, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. 3. The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. 4. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry. 5. Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things. 6. For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God. 7. For thus saith the LORD, Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. 8. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. 9. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born

God here assures his people,

1. That he will again take them into a covenant-relation to himself, from which they seemed to have been cut off. *At the same time*, when God's anger breaks out against the *wicked*, (*ch. xxx. 24.*) his own people shall be owned by him as the children of his love; *I will be the God, I will show myself to be the God, of all the families of Israel;* (*v. 1.*) not of the two tribes only, but of all the tribes; not of the house of Aaron only, and the families of Levi, but of all their families; not only their state in general, but their particular families, and the interests of them, shall have the benefit of a special relation to God. Note, The families of good people, in their family-capacity, may apply themselves to God, and stay themselves upon him as their God. If we and our houses serve the Lord, we and our houses shall be protected and blessed by him, *Prov. iii. 33.*

2. That he will do for them, in bringing them out of Babylon, as he had done for their fathers when he delivered them out of Egypt, and as he had purposed to do when he first took them to be his people. (1.) He puts them in mind of what he did for their fathers when he brought them out of Egypt; (*v. 2.*) they were then, as these were, a *people left of the sword*, that sword of Pharaoh, with which he cut off all the male children as soon as they were born, (a bloody sword indeed they had narrowly escaped,) and that sword with which he threatened to cut them off when he pursued them to the Red Sea. They were then in the *wilderness*, where they seemed to be lost and forgotten, as they were now in a strange land, and yet they *found grace* in God's sight, were owned and highly honoured by him, and blessed with wonderful instances of his peculiar favour, and he was at this time going to *cause them to rest* in Canaan. Note, When we are brought very low, and insuperable difficulties appear in the way of our deliverance, it is good to remember that it has been so with the church formerly, and yet that it has been raised up from its low estate, and has got to Canaan through all the hardships of a wilderness; and God is still the same. (2.) They put him in mind of what God had done for their fathers, intimating that they now saw not such signs, and were ready to ask, as Gideon did, *Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of?* *v. 3.* It is true, *The Lord hath appeared of old unto me*, in Egypt, in the wilderness, *hath appeared* with me, and for me, hath been seen in his glory as my God; the years of ancient times were glorious years; but now it is otherwise; what good will it do us, that he *appeared of old* to us, when now he is *a God that hides himself* from us? *Isa. xlv. 15.* Note, It is hard to take comfort from former smiles, under present frowns. (3.) To this he answers, with an assurance of the constancy of his love, *Yea, I have loved thee*, not only with an ancient love, but *with an everlasting love*, a love that shall never fail, however the comforts of it may for a time be suspended. It is *an everlasting love*, therefore have I extended or drawn out *loving-kindness* unto thee also, as well as to thine ancestors; or, *with loving-kindness have I drawn thee* to myself as thy God, from all the idols to which thou hadst turned aside. Note, It is the happiness of those who are through grace interested in the love of God, that it is *an everlasting love*, (*from everlasting in the counsels of it*, to everlasting in the continuance and consequences of it,) and that nothing can separate them from that love. Those whom God loves with this love, he will draw into covenant and communion with himself, by the influences of his Spirit upon their souls; he will *draw them with loving-kindness*, with the cords of a man,

and bands of love, than which no attractive can be more powerful.

3. That he will again form them into a people, and give them a very joyful settlement in their own land, *v. 4, 5.* Is the church of God his house, his temple? Is it now in ruins? It is so; but, *Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built.* Are the parts of this building dispersed? They shall be collected, and put together again, each in its place. If God undertake to build them, they shall be built, whatever opposition may be given to it. Is *Israel* a beautiful virgin? Is she now stripped of her ornaments, and reduced to a melancholy state? She is so; but *thou shalt again be adorned*, and made fine, adorned *with thy tabrets*, or timbrels, the ornaments of thy chamber, and made merry. They shall resume their harps which had been hung upon the willow trees, shall tune them, and shall themselves be in tune to make use of them; they shall be adorned with their tabrets, for now their mirth and music shall be seasonable, it shall be a proper time for it, God in his providence shall call them to it, and then it shall be an ornament to them; whereas tabrets, at a time of common calamity, when God called to mourning, were a shame to them. Or, it may refer to their use of tabrets in the solemnizing of their religious feasts, and their *going forth in dances* then, as the *daughters of Shiloh*, *Judg. xxi. 19, 21.* Our mirth is then indeed an ornament to us, when we serve God and honour him with it. Is the joy of the city maintained by the products of the country? It is so; and therefore it is promised, (*v. 5.*) *Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria*, which had been the head city of the kingdom of Israel, in opposition to that of *Ju'lah*; but they shall now be united, (*Ezek. xxxvii. 22.*) and there shall be such perfect peace and security, that men shall apply themselves wholly to the improvement of their ground; *the planters shall plant*, not fearing the soldiers' coming to eat the fruits of what they had planted, or to pluck it up; but they themselves *shall eat them freely*, as *common things*, not forbidden fruits, not forbidden by the law of God, (as they were till the fifth year, *Lev. xix. 23.—25.*) not forbidden by the owners, because there shall be such plenty as to yield enough for all, for each.

4. That they shall have liberty and opportunity to worship God in the ordinances of his own appointment, and shall have both invitations and inclinations to do so; (*v. 6.*) *There shall be a day*, and a glorious day it will be, when the *watchmen upon mount Ephraim*, that are set to stand sentinel there, to give notice of the approach of the enemy, finding that all is very quiet, and that there is no appearance of danger, shall desire for a time to be discharged from their post, that they may *go up to Zion*, to praise God for the public peace. Or, the *watchmen* that tend the vineyards, spoken of, *v. 5.* shall stir up themselves, and one another, and all their neighbours, to go, and keep the solemn feast at Jerusalem. Now this implies that the service of God shall be again set up in Zion, that there shall be a general resort to it, with much affection and mutual excitement, as in David's time, *Ps. cxxii. 1.* But that which is most observable here, is, *that the watchmen of Ephraim* are forward to promote the worship of God at Jerusalem, whereas formerly *the watchman of Ephraim was hatred against the house of his God*, (*Hos. ix. 8.*) and, instead of inviting people to Zion, laid snares for those that set their faces thitherward, *Hos. v. 1.* Note, God can make those who have been enemies to religion and the true worship of God, to become encouragers of them, and leaders in them. This promise was to have its full accomplishment in the days of the

Messiah, when the gospel should be preached to all these countries, and a general invitation hereby given into the church of Christ, of which Zion was a type.

5. That God shall have the glory, and the church both the honour and comfort, of this blessed change; (v. 7.) *Sing with gladness for Jacob*, let all her friends and well-wishers rejoice with her, Deut. xxxii. 43. *Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people*, Rom. xv. 10. The restoration of Jacob will be taken notice of by all the neighbours, it will be matter of joy to them all, and they shall all join with Jacob in his joys, and thereby pay him respect, and put a reputation upon him. Even the chief of the nations, that make the greatest figure, shall think it an honour to them to congratulate the restoration of Jacob, and shall do themselves the honour to send their ambassadors on that errand. *Publish ye, praise ye*; in publishing these tidings, praise the God of Israel, praise the Israel of God, speak honourably of both. The publishers of the gospel must do it with praise, and therefore it is often spoken of in the *Psalms*, as mingled with praises, Ps. lxxvii. 2, 3.—xcvi. 2, 3. What we either bring to others, or take to ourselves the comfort of, we must be sure to give God the praise of. *Praise ye, and say, O Lord, save thy people*; perfect their salvation, go on to save the remnant of Israel, that are yet in bondage; as Ps. cxxvi. 3, 4. Note, When we are praising God for what he has done, we must call upon him for the future favours which his church is in need and expectation of; and in praying to him we really praise him, and give him glory; he takes it so.

6. That, in order to a happy settlement in their own land, they shall have a joyful return out of the land of their captivity, and a very comfortable passage homeward, (v. 8, 9.) and this beginning of mercy shall be to them a pledge of all the other blessings here promised. (1.) Though they are scattered to places far remote, yet they shall be brought together from the north country, and from the coasts of the earth; wherever they are, God will find them out. (2.) Though many of them are very unfit for travel, yet that shall be no hindrance to them; the blind and the lame shall come; such a good-will shall they have to their journey, and such a good heart upon it, that they shall not make their blindness and lameness an excuse for staying where they are. Their companions will be ready to help them, will be eyes to the blind, and legs to the lame, as good Christians ought to be to one another in their travels heavenward, Job xxix. 15. But, above all, their God will help them; and let none plead that he is blind, who has God for his Guide; or lame, who has God for his Strength. *The women with child* are heavy, and it is not fit that they should undertake such a journey, much less those that travel with child; and yet, when it is to return to Zion, neither the one nor the other shall make any difficulty of it. Note, When God calls, we must not plead any inability to come; for he that calls us will help us, will strengthen us. (3.) Though they seem to be diminished, and to become few in numbers, yet, when they come all together, they shall be a great company; and so will God's spiritual Israel be, when there shall be a general rendezvous of them, though now they are but a little flock. (4.) Though their return will be matter of joy to them, yet prayers and tears will be both their stores and their artillery; (v. 9.) *They shall come with weeping, and with supplications; weeping for sin, supplication for pardon; for the goodness of God shall lead them to repentance*; and they shall weep with more bitterness and more tenderness for sin, when they are delivered out of their captivity, than ever they did when they were groaning under it. *Weep-*

ing and praying do well together; tears put life into prayers, and express the liveliness of them, and prayers help to wipe away tears. *With favours will I lead them*; (so the margin reads it); in their journey they shall be compassed with God's favours, the fruits of his favour. (5.) Though they have a perilous journey, yet they shall be safe under a divine convoy. Is the country they pass through dry and thirsty? *I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters*, not the waters of a land-flood, which fail in summer. Is it a wilderness where there is no road, no track? *I will cause them to walk in a straight way*, which they shall not miss. Is it a rough and rocky country? *Yet they shall not stumble*. Note, Whithersoever God gives his people a clear call, he will either find them, or make them, a ready way; and while we are following Providence, we may be sure that Providence will not be wanting to us. And, lastly, here is a reason given why God will take all this care of his people; *for I am a Father to Israel*, a father that begat him, and therefore will maintain him, that have the care and compassion of a father for him; (Ps. ciii. 13.) *and Ephraim is my first-born*, even Ephraim, who, having gone astray from God, was no more worthy to be called a son, shall yet be owned as a first-born, particularly dear, and heir of a double portion of blessings. The same reason that was given for their release out of Egypt, is given for their release out of Babylon; they are free-born, and therefore must not be enslaved; are born to God, and therefore must not be the servants of men; (Exod. iv. 22, 23.) *Israel is my son, my first-born; let my son go, that he may serve me*. If we take God for our Father, and join ourselves to the church of the first-born, we may be assured that we shall want nothing that is good for us.

10. Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattereth Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. 11. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. 12. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock, and of the herd: and their souls shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. 13. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. 14. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD. 15. Thus saith the LORD, A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. 16. Thus saith the LORD, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. 17. And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that

thy children shall come again to their own border.

This paragraph is much to the same purport with the last, publishing to the world, as well as to the church, the purposes of God's love concerning his people. This is a *word of the Lord*, which the nations must hear, for it is a prophecy of a work of the Lord, which the nations cannot but take notice of. Let them hear the prophecy, that they may the better understand and improve the performance; and let them that hear it themselves, declare it to others, *declare it in the isles afar off*. It will be a piece of news that will spread all the world over. It will look very great in history; let us see how it looks in prophecy. It is foretold,

1. That those who are dispersed, shall be brought together again from their dispersions; *He that scattered Israel will gather him*; for he knows whither he scattered them, and therefore where to find them, *v. 10. Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit—The hand that inflicted the wound shall heal it*. And when he has gathered him into one body, one fold, he will *keep him, as a shepherd does his flock*, from being scattered again.

2. That those who are sold and alienated, shall be redeemed and brought back, *v. 11*. Though the enemy that had got possession of him, *was stronger than he*, yet the Lord, who is stronger than all, *has redeemed and ransomed him*, not by price, but by power, as of old out of the Egyptians' hands.

3. That with their liberty they shall have plenty and joy, and God shall be honoured and served with it, *v. 12, 13*. When they are returned to their own land, *they shall come, and sing in the high place of Zion*; on the top of that holy mountain they shall sing to the praise and glory of God. We read that they did so when the foundation of the temple was laid there; *they sang together, praising, and giving thanks to the Lord*, Ezra iii. 11. *They shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord*; they shall flock in great numbers and with great forwardness and cheerfulness, as streams of water, *to the goodness of the Lord*, to the temple where he causes his goodness to pass before his people. They shall come together in solemn assemblies, *to praise him for his goodness*, and to pray for the fruits of it, and the continuance of it; they shall come to bless him for his goodness, in giving them *wheat, and wine, and oil, and the young of the flock and of the herd*, which, now that they have obtained their freedom, they have an uncontested property in, and the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of; and which therefore they honour God with the first-fruits of, and out of which they bring offerings to his altar. Note, It is comfortable to observe the *goodness of the Lord* in the gifts of common providence, and even in them to taste covenant-love. Having plenty, (plenty out of want and scarcity,) they shall greatly rejoice, *their soul shall be as a watered garden*, flourishing and fruitful, (Isa. lviii. 11.) pleasant and fragrant, and abounding in all good things. Note, Our souls are never valuable as gardens but when they are watered with the dews of God's Spirit and grace. It is a precious promise which follows, and which will not have its full accomplishment any where on this side the height of the heavenly Zion, *that they shall not sorrow any more at all*; for it is only in that new Jerusalem *that all tears shall be wiped away*, Rev. xxi. 4. However, so far it was fulfilled to the returned captives, that they had not any more those causes for sorrow, that they had had; and therefore (*v. 13*.) *young men and old shall rejoice together*; so grave shall the young men be in their joys, as to keep company with the old men, and so transported shall the old men be, as to associate with the young. *Salva res est, saltat senex—The state prospers, and*

the aged dance. God will turn their mourning into joy, their fasts into solemn feasts, Zech. viii. 19. It was in the return out of Babylon that they *who sowed in tears*, were made to *reap in joy*, Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6. Those are comforted indeed, whom God comforts, and may forget their troubles, when he makes them to *rejoice from their sorrow*; not only rejoice after it, but rejoice from it; their joy shall borrow lustre from their sorrow, which shall serve as a foil to it; and the more they think of their troubles, the more shall they rejoice in their deliverance.

4. That both the ministers, and those they minister to, shall have abundant satisfaction in what God gives them; (*v. 14*.) *I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness*; there shall be such plenty of sacrifices brought to the altar, that they who *live upon the altar*, shall live very comfortably, they and their families shall be *satiated with fatness*, they shall have enough, and that of the best; and *my people shall be satisfied with my goodness*, and shall think there is enough in that to make them happy; and so there is. God's people have an abundant satisfaction in God's goodness, though they have but little of this world. Let them be satisfied of God's loving-kindness, and they will be satisfied with it, and desire no more to make them happy. All this is applicable to the spiritual blessings which the redeemed of the Lord enjoy by Jesus Christ, infinitely more valuable than corn, and wine, and oil, and the satisfaction of soul which they have in the enjoyment of them.

5. That those, particularly, who had been in sorrow for the loss of their children who were carried into captivity, should have that sorrow turned into joy upon their return, *v. 15—17*. Here we have,

(1.) The sad lamentation which the mothers made for the loss of their children; (*v. 15*.) *In Ramah was there a voice heard*, at the time when the general captivity was, nothing but *lamentation, and bitter weeping*, more there than in other places, because there Nebuzaradan had the general rendezvous of his captives, as appears, *ch. xl. 1*. where we find him sending Jeremiah back from Ramah. *Rachel* is here said to *weep for her children*. The sepulchre of Rachel was between Ramah and Bethlechem. Benjamin, one of the two tribes, and Ephraim, head of the ten tribes, were both descendants from Rachel. She had but two sons, the elder of which was one for whom his father grieved, and *refused to be comforted*, (Gen. xxxvii. 35.) the other she herself called *Benoni—the son of my sorrow*. Now the inhabitants of Ramah did in like manner *grieve for their sons and their daughters* that were carried away, (as 1 Sam. xxx. 6.) and such a voice of lamentation was there, as, to speak poetically, might even have raised Rachel out of her grave to mourn with them. The tender parents even *refused to be comforted for their children, because they were not*, were not with them, but were in the hands of their enemies; they were never likely to see them more. This is applied by the evangelists to the great mourning that was at Bethlechem for the murder of the infants there by Herod; (Matth. ii. 17, 18.) and this scripture is said to be then fulfilled. They wept for them, and *would not be comforted*, supposing the case would not admit any ground of comfort, *because they were not*. Note, Sorrow for the loss of children cannot but be great sorrow, especially if we so far mistake as to think they are not.

(2.) Seasonable comfort administered to them in reference hereunto, *v. 16, 17*. They are advised to moderate that sorrow, and to set bounds to it; *Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears*. We are not forbidden to mourn in such a case, allowances are made for natural affection; but we must not suffer our sorrow to run into an extreme, to hinder our joy in God, or take us off from cur

duty to him; though we mourn, we must not murmur, nor must we resolve, as Jacob did, to go to the grave mourning. In order to repress inordinate grief, we must consider that *there is hope in our end*, hope that there will be an end, the trouble will not last always, that it will be a happy end, the end will be peace. Note, It ought to support us under our troubles, that we have reason to hope they will end well. *The righteous has hope in his death*; that will be the blessed period of his griefs, and the blessed passage to his joys. "*There is hope for thy posterity*;" (so some read it); "though thou mayest not live to see these glorious days thyself, there is hope that thy posterity shall. Though one generation falls in the wilderness, the next shall enter Canaan. Two things thou mayest comfort thyself with the hope of," [1.] "The reward of thy work; *Thy suffering-work shall be rewarded*. The comforts of the deliverance shall be sufficient to balance all the grievances of thy captivity." God makes his people *glad according to the days wherein he has afflicted them*, and so there is a proportion between the joys and the sorrows, as between the reward and the work. The *glory to be revealed*, which the saints *hope for in their end*, will abundantly countervail the *sufferings of this present time*, Rom. viii. 18. [2.] "The restoration of thy children;" *They shall come again from the land of the enemy*, (v. 16.) *they shall come again to their own border*, v. 17. *There is hope* that children at a distance may be brought home; Jacob had a comfortable meeting with Joseph, after he had despaired of ever seeing him. There is hope concerning children removed by death, that they shall *return to their own border*, to the happy lot assigned them in the resurrection, a lot in the heavenly Canaan, that border of his sanctuary. We shall see reason to repress our grief for the death of our children that are taken into covenant with God, when we consider the hopes we have of their resurrection to eternal life. They are not lost, but gone before.

18. I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself *thus*; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. 19. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. 20. *Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child?* For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD. 21. Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thy heart toward the highway, *even the way which thou wentest*: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities. 22. How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man. 23. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah, and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. 24.

And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. 25. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. 26. Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.

We have here,

1. Ephraim's repentance, and return to God. Not only Judah, but Ephraim, the ten tribes, shall be restored, and therefore shall thus be prepared and qualified for it, Hos. xiv. 8. *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?* Ephraim, the people, is here spoken of as a single person, to denote their unanimity; they shall be as one man in their repentance, and shall glorify God in it with one mind and one mouth, one and all. It is likewise thus expressed, that it might be the better accommodated to particular penitents, for whose direction and encouragement this passage is interded. Ephraim is here brought in, weeping for sin, perhaps because Ephraim, the person from whom that tribe had its denomination, was a man of a tender spirit, *mourned for his children many days*; (1 Chron. vii. 21, 22.) and sorrow for sin is compared to that *for an only son*. This penitent is here brought in, (1.) Bemoaning himself, and the miseries of his present case. True penitents do thus bemoan themselves. (2.) Accusing himself, laying a load upon himself as a sinner, a great sinner. He charges upon himself, in the first place, that sin which his conscience told him that he was more especially guilty of at this time; and that was, impatience under correction; "*Thou hast chastised me; I have been under the rod, and I needed it; I deserved it; I was justly chastised, chastised as a bullock*, who had never felt the goad if he had not first rebelled against the yoke." True penitents look upon their afflictions as fatherly chastisements; "*Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised*; it was well that I was chastised, otherwise I had been undone; it did me good, or at least was intended to do me good; and yet I have been impatient under it." Or, it may speak his want of feeling under the affliction; "*Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised*, that was all, I was not awakened by it, and quickened by it; I looked no further than the chastisement. *I have been under the chastisement as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*, unruly and unmanageable, *kicking against the pricks, like a wild bull in a net*," Isa. li. 20. This is the sin he finds himself guilty of now; but (v. 19.) he reflects upon his former sins, and looks as far back as the days of his youth. The discovery of one sin should put us upon searching out more; now he remembers the *reproach of his youth*. Ephraim, as a people, reflects upon the misconduct of their ancestors, when they were first formed into a people. It is applicable to particular persons. Note, The sin of our youth was the reproach of our youth, and we ought often to remember it against ourselves, and to bear it in a penitential sorrow and shame. (3.) He is here brought in, angry at himself, having a holy indignation at himself for his sin and folly; *he smote upon his thigh*, as the *publican upon his breast*; he was even amazed at himself, and at his own stupidity and frowardness; *he was ashamed, yea, even confounded*, could not with any confidence look up to God, nor with any comfort reflect upon himself. (4.) He is here recommending himself to the mercy and grace of God. He finds he is bent to backslide from God, and cannot by any power of his own keep himself close with God, much less, when he is revolted, bring himself back to God, and therefore he prays,

Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; which implies that unless God do turn him by his grace, he shall never be turned, but wander endlessly; that therefore he is very desirous of converting grace, has a dependence upon it, and doubts not but that that grace will be sufficient for him, to help him over all the difficulties that were in the way of his return to God. See *ch. xvii. 14. Heal me, and I shall be healed.* God works with power, can make the unwilling willing; if he undertake the conversion of a soul, it will be converted. (5.) He is here pleasing himself with the experience he had of the blessed effect of divine grace; *Surely after that I was turned, I repented.* Note, All the pious workings of our hearts toward God, are the fruit and consequence of the powerful working of his grace in us. And observe, *He was turned,* he was instructed, his will was bowed to the will of God, by the right informing of his judgment concerning the truths of God. Note, The way God takes of converting souls to himself, is, by opening the eyes of their understandings, and all good follows thereupon; *After that I was instructed, I yielded, I smote upon my thigh.* When sinners come to a right knowledge, they will come to a right way. Ephraim was chastised, and that did not produce the desired effect, it went no further; *I was chastised, and that was all.* But when the instructions of God's Spirit accompanied the corrections of his providence, then the work was done, then he *smote upon his thigh,* was so humbled for sin as to have no more to do with it.

2. God's compassion on Ephraim, and the kind reception he finds with God, *v. 20.* (1.) He owns him for a child, though he has been an undutiful child and a prodigal; *Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child?* Thus when Ephraim bemoans himself, God bemoans him, as *one whom his mother comforts,* though she had chidden him, *Isa. lxi. 13.* *Is this Ephraim my dear son? Is this that pleasant child?* Is it he that is thus sad in spirit, and that complains so bitterly? So it is like that of Saul, (*1 Sam. xxvi. 17.*) *Is this thy voice, my son David?* Or, as it is sometimes supplied, *Is not Ephraim my dear son? Is he not a pleasant child?* Yes, now he is, now he repents and returns. Note, Those that have been undutiful, backsliding children, if they sincerely return and repent, however they have been under the chastisement of the rod, shall be accepted of God as *dear and pleasant children.* Ephraim had afflicted himself, but God thus heals him: and abased himself, but God thus honours him; as the returning prodigal, who thought himself no more worthy to be called a son, yet, by his father, had the *best robe* put upon him, and a *ring on his hand.* (2.) He relents toward him, and speaks of him with a great deal of tender compassion; *Since I spake against him,* by the threatenings of the word and the rebukes of providence, *I do earnestly remember him still,* my thoughts toward him are thoughts of peace. Note, When God afflicts his people, yet he does not forget them; when he casts them out of their land, yet he does not cast them out of sight, nor out of mind. Even then when God is speaking against us, yet he is acting for us, and designing our good in all; and this is our comfort in our affliction, that *the Lord thinks upon us,* though we have forgotten him. *I remember him still,* and therefore *my bowels are troubled for him,* as Joseph's yearned toward his brethren, even then when he *shake roughly* to them. When Israel's afflictions extorted a penitent confession and submission, it is said, that his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel; (*Judg. x. 16.*) for he always afflicts with the greatest tenderness. It was God's compassion that mitigated Ephraim's punishment; *My heart is turned within me;* (*Hos. xi. 8, 9.*) and

now the same compassion accepted Ephraim's repentance. Ephraim had pleaded, (*v. 18.*) *Thou art the Lord my God,* therefore to thee will I return; therefore on thy mercy and grace I will depend; and God shows it was a valid plea, and prevailing, for he makes it appear both that he is God, and not man, and that he is *his God.* (3.) He resolves to do him good; *I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.* Note, God has mercy in store, rich mercy, sure mercy, suitable mercy, for all that in sincerity seek him, and submit to him; and the more we are afflicted for sin, the better prepared we are for the comforts of that mercy.

3. Gracious excitements and encouragements given to the people of God in Babylon, to prepare for their return to their own land. Let them not tremble, and lose their spirits; let them not trifle, and lose their time; but with a firm resolution and a close application address themselves to their journey, *v. 21, 22.* (1.) They must think of nothing but of coming back to their own country, out of which they had been driven; *"Turn again, O virgin of Israel, a virgin to be again espoused to thy God, turn again to these thy cities;* though they are laid waste and in ruins, they are *thy cities,* which thy God gave thee, and therefore *turn again to them."* They must be content in Babylon no longer than till they had liberty to return to Zion. (2.) They must return the same way that they went, that the remembrance of the sorrows which attended them, or which their fathers had told them of, in such and such places upon the road, the sight of which would, by a local memory, put them in mind of them, might make them the more thankful for their deliverance. Those that have departed from God into the bondage of sin, must return by the way in which they went astray, to the duties they neglected, must *do their first works.* (3.) They must engage themselves and all that is within them in this affair; *Set thy heart toward the highway;* bring thy mind to it; consider thy duty, thine interest, and go about it with a good will. Note, The way from Babylon to Zion, from the bondage of sin to the glorious liberty of God's children, is a highway; it is right, it is plain, it is safe, it is well tracked; (*Isa. xxxv. 8.*) yet none are likely to walk in it, unless they *set their hearts towards it.* (4.) They must furnish themselves with all needful accommodations for their journey; *Set thee up way-marks, and make thee high heaps or pillars;* send before to have such set up in all places where there is any danger of missing the road. Let those that go first, and are best acquainted with the way, set up such directions for those that follow. (5.) They must compose themselves for their journey. *How long wilt thou go about, O backsliding daughter?* Let not their minds fluctuate, or be uncertain about it, but resolve upon it; let them not distract themselves with care and fear; let them not seek about to creatures for assistance, nor hurry hither and thither in courting them, which had often been an instance of their *backsliding* from God; but let them cast themselves upon God, and then let their minds be fixed. (6.) They are encouraged to do this by an assurance God gives them, that he would *create a new thing,* strange and surprising *in the earth,* in that land a *woman shall compass a man.* The church of God, that is weak and feeble as a woman, altogether unapt for military employments, and of a timorous spirit, shall *surround, beset, and prevail against a mighty man,* *Isa. liv. 6.* The church is compared to a woman, *Rev. xii. 1.* And whereas we find *armies compassing the camp of the saints,* (*Rev. xx. 9.*) now the camp of the saints shall compass them. Many good interpreters understand this *new thing* created in that land to be the incarnation of Christ, which God had an eye to in bringing them back to

that land, and which had sometimes been given them for a sign, Isa. vii. 14.—ix. 6. *A woman*, the Virgin Mary, enclosed in her womb the *Mighty One*, for so *Geber*, the word here used, signifies; and God is called *Gibbor*, the *Mighty God*, (ch. xxxii. 18.) and so is Christ there where his incarnation is spoken of, as it is supposed to be here, Isa. ix. 6. He is *El-Gibbor*, the *Mighty God*. Let this assure them that God would not cast off this people, for that blessing was to be among them, Isa. lxxv. 8.

4. A comfortable prospect given them of a happy settlement in their own land again. (1.) They shall have an interest in the esteem and good-will of all their neighbours, who will give them a good word, and put up a good prayer for them; (v. 23.) *As yet*, or rather, *yet again*, (though Judah and Jerusalem have long been an astonishment and an hissing,) *this speech shall be used*, as it was formerly, *concerning the land of Judah, and the cities thereof*, The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. This intimates that they shall return much reformed, and every way better; and this reformation shall be so conspicuous, that all about them shall take notice of it. The cities, that used to be nests of pirates, shall be *habitations of justice*; the *mountain of Israel*, (so the whole land is called, Ps. lxxviii. 54.) and especially mount Zion, shall be a *mountain of holiness*. Observe, justice toward men, and holiness toward God, must go together. Godliness and honesty are what God has joined, and let no man think to put them asunder, or to make one to atone for the want of the other. It is well with a people when they come out of trouble thus refined, and it is a sure presage of further happiness. And we may with great comfort pray for the blessing of God upon those houses that are *habitations of justice*, those cities and countries that are *mountains of holiness*. There the Lord will undoubtedly *command the blessing*. (2.) There shall be great plenty of all good things among them; (v. 24, 25.) *There shall dwell in Judah itself*, even in it, though it has now long lain waste, both *husbandmen and shepherds*, the two ancient and honourable employments of Cain and Abel, Gen. iv. 2. It is comfortable dwelling in a *habitation of justice*, and a *mountain of holiness*. And the husbandmen and shepherds shall eat of the fruit of their labours, for I have *satiated the weary and sorrowful souls*; they that came weary from their journey, and have been long sorrowful in their captivity, shall now enjoy great plenty. This is applicable to the spiritual blessings God has in store for all true penitents, for all that are just and holy; they shall be abundantly satisfied with divine graces and comforts. In the love and favour of God the weary soul shall find rest, and the sorrowful soul joy.

Lastly, The prophet tells us what pleasure the discovery of this brought to his mind, v. 26. The foresight God had given him sometimes of the calamities of Judah and Jerusalem, were exceedingly painful to him, (as ch. iv. 19.) but these views were pleasing ones, though at a distance. *Upon this I awaked*, overcome with joy, which burst the fetters of sleep; and I reflected upon my dream, and it was such as had made *my sleep sweet to me*; I was refreshed, as men are with quiet sleep. Those may sleep sweetly, that lie down and rise up in the favour of God, and in communion with him. Nor is any prospect in this world more pleasing to good men, and good ministers, than that of the flourishing state of the church of God. What can we see with more satisfaction than the good of Jerusalem, *all the days of our life, and peace upon Israel*?

27. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel, and the house of Judah, with the seed of

man, and with the seed of beast. 28. And it shall come to pass, *that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant*, saith the LORD. 29. In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. 30. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. 31. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; 32. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them; saith the LORD;) 33. But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

The prophet, having found his *sleep sweet*, made so by the revelations of divine grace, sets himself to sleep again, in hopes of further discoveries, and is not disappointed; for it is here further promised,

I. That the people of God shall become both numerous and prosperous. Israel and Judah shall be replenished both with men and cattle, as if they were sown *with the seed* of both, v. 27. They shall increase and multiply like a field sown with corn; and this is the product of God's blessing, (v. 23.) for whom God blessed, to them he said, *Be fruitful*. This should be a type of the wonderful increase of the gospel-church. God will *build* them, and *plant* them, v. 28. He will *watch over them*, to do them good; no opportunity shall be lost, that may further their prosperity. Every thing for a long time had turned so much against them, and all occurrences did so conspire to ruin them, that it seemed as if God had *watched over them, to pluck up, and to throw down*; but now every thing that falls out, shall happily fall in to strengthen and advance their interests. God will be as ready to comfort those that repent of their sins, and are humbled for them, as he is to punish those that continue in love with their sins, and are hardened in them.

II. That they shall be reckoned with no further for the sins of their fathers; (v. 29, 30.) *They shall say no more*, they shall have no more occasion to say, that *God visits the iniquity of the parents upon the children*, which God had done in the captivity; for the sins of their ancestors came into the account against them, particularly those of Manasseh: this they had complained of as a hardship. Other scriptures justify God in this method of proceeding,

and our Saviour tells the wicked Jews in his days, that they should smart for their fathers' sins, because they persisted in them, *Matth. xxiii. 35, 36*. But it is here promised that this severe dispensation with them should now be brought to an end; that God would proceed no further in his controversy with them for their fathers' sins, but remember for them his covenant with their fathers, and do them good according to that covenant; *They shall no more complain, as they have done, that the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge*; (which speaks something of an absurdity, and is an invidious reflection upon God's proceedings;) but *every one shall die for his own iniquity* still; though God will cease to punish them in their national capacity, yet he will still reckon with particular persons that provoke him. Note, Public salvations will give no impunity, no security to private sinners: still *every man that eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge*. Note, Those that eat forbidden fruit, how temptingly soever it looks, will find it a *sour grape*, and it will set their teeth on edge, sooner or later they will feel from it, and reflect upon it with bitterness. There is as direct a tendency in sin to make a man uneasy, as there is in sour grapes to set the teeth on edge.

III. That God will renew his covenant with them, so that all these blessings they shall have, not by providence only, but by promise, and thereby they shall be both sweetened and secured. But this covenant refers to gospel-times, the latter days that *shall come*; for of gospel-grace the apostle understands it, (*Heb. viii. 8, 9, &c.*) where this whole passage is quoted, as a summary of the covenant of grace made with believers in Jesus Christ. Observe,

1. Who the persons are, with whom this covenant is made, *with the house of Israel and Judah*, with the gospel-church, *the Israel of God*, on which *peace shall be*, (*Gal. vi. 16*.) with the spiritual seed of believing Abraham and praying Jacob. Judah and Israel had been two separate kingdoms, but were united, after their return, in the joint favours God bestowed upon them: so Jews and Gentiles were in the gospel-church and covenant.

2. What is the nature of this covenant in general; it is a *new covenant*, and *not according to the covenant made with them, when they came out of Egypt*; not as if that made with them at mount Sinai were a covenant of nature and innocence, such as was made with Adam in the day he was created; no; that was, for substance, a covenant of grace, but it was a dark dispensation of that covenant, in comparison with this in gospel-times. Sinners were saved by that covenant, upon their repentance, and faith in a Messiah to come, whose blood, confirming that covenant, was typified by that of the legal sacrifices, *Exod. xxiv. 7, 8*. Yet this may upon many accounts be called new, in comparison with that; the ordinances and promises are more spiritual and heavenly, and the discoveries much more clear. That covenant God made with them when he *took them by the hand*, as if they had been blind or lame, or weak, to lead them out of the land of Egypt, *which covenant they brake*. Observe, It was God that made this covenant, but it was the people that brake it; for our salvation is of God, but our sin and ruin are of ourselves. It was an aggravation of their breach of it, that God *was a Husband to them*, that he had espoused them to himself, it was a marriage-covenant that was between him and them, which they brake by idolatry, that spiritual adultery. It is a great aggravation of our treacherous departures from God, that he has been a Husband to us, a loving, tender, careful Husband, faithful to us, and yet we false to him.

3. What are the particular articles of this covenant; they all contain spiritual blessings; not, "I

will give them the land of Canaan and a numerous issue," but, "I will give them pardon, and peace, and grace, good heads and good hearts." He promises,

(1.) That he will incline them to their duty; *I will put my law in their inward part, and write it in their heart*; not, I will give them a new law, (as Mr. Gataker well observes,) for Christ *came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it*; but the law shall be written in their hearts by the finger of the Spirit, as formerly it was written in the tables of stone. God writes his law in the hearts of all believers, makes it ready and familiar to them, at hand when they have occasion to use it, as that which is *written in the heart*, *Prov. iii. 3*. He makes them in care to observe it, for that which we are solicitous about, is said to *lie near our hearts*. He works in them a disposition to obedience, a conformity of thought and affection to the rules of the divine law, as that of the copy to the original. This is here promised, and ought to be prayed for, that our duty may be done conscientiously and with delight.

(2.) That he will take them into relation to himself; *I will be their God*, a God all-sufficient to them; and *they shall be my people*, a loyal, obedient people to me. God's being to us a God is the summary of all happiness, heaven itself is no more, *Heb. xi. 16. Rev. xxi. 3*. Our being to him a people may be taken either as the condition on our part, (those and those only shall have God to be to them a God, that are truly willing to engage themselves to be to him a people,) or as a further branch of the promise, that God will by his grace make us his people, a *willing people, in the day of his power*; and, whoever are his people, it is his grace that makes them so.

(3.) That there shall be an abundance of the knowledge of God among all sorts of people, and this will have an influence upon all good; for they that rightly know God's name, will seek him, and serve him, and put their trust in him; (*v. 24*.) *All shall know me*; all shall be welcome to the knowledge of God, and shall have the means of that knowledge; *his way shall be known upon earth*; whereas, for many ages, in Judah *only was God known*. Many more shall know God than did in the Old Testament times, which among the Gentiles were times of ignorance, the true God being to them an unknown God. The things of God shall in gospel-times be made more plain and intelligible, and level to the capacities of the meanest, than they had been, while Moses had a *veil upon his face*. There shall be such a general knowledge of God, that there shall not be so much need as had formerly been of teaching. Some take it as a hyperbolical expression, (and the dulness of the Jews needed such expressions to awaken them,) designed only to show that the knowledge of God, in gospel-times should vastly exceed that knowledge of him, which they had under the law. Or, perhaps, it intimates that in gospel-times there shall be such great plenty of public preaching, steadily and constantly, by men authorised and appointed to *preach the word in season and out of season*, much beyond what was under the law; that there shall be less need than there was then of fraternal teaching, by a neighbour and a brother. The priests preached but now and then, and in the temple, to a few in comparison; but now *all shall or may know God* by frequenting the assemblies of Christians, wherein, through all parts of the church, the good knowledge of God shall be taught. Some give this sense of it, (Mr. Gataker mentions it,) that many shall have such clearness of understanding in the things of God, that they may seem rather to have been taught by some immediate irradiation than by any means of instruction in short, the

things of God shall by the gospel of Christ be brought to a clearer light than ever, (2 Tim. i. 10.) and the people of God shall by the grace of Christ be brought to a clearer sight of those things than ever, Eph. i. 17, 18.

(4.) That, in order to all these blessings, sin shall be pardoned; this is made the reason of all the rest; *For I will forgive their iniquity*, will not impute that to them, nor deal with them according to the desert of that, *will forgive and forget; I will remember their sin no more.* It is sin that keeps good things from us, that stops the current of God's favours; let sin be taken away by pardoning mercy, and the obstruction is removed, and divine grace runs down like a river, like a mighty stream.

35. Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, *and* the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: 36. If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, *then* the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. 37. Thus saith the LORD, If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel, for all that they have done, saith the LORD. 38. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD, from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. 39. And the measuring-line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. 40. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields, unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse-gate towards the east, *shall be* holy unto the LORD; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down, any more for ever.

Glorious things have been spoken in the foregoing verses concerning the gospel-church, which that epocha of the Jewish church, that was to commence at the return from captivity, would at length terminate in, and which all those promises were to have their full accomplishments in. But may we depend upon these promises? Yes, we have here a ratification of them, and the utmost assurance imaginable given of the perpetuity of the blessings contained in them. The great thing here secured to us, is, that while the world stands, God will have a church in it, which, though sometimes it may be brought very low, shall yet be raised again, and its interests re-established; it is *built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* Now here are two things offered for the confirmation of our faith in this matter; the building of the world, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

I. The building of the world, and the firmness and lastingness of that building, are evidences of the power and faithfulness of that God who has undertaken the establishment of his church. *He that built all things at first is God,* (Heb. iii. 4.) and the same is he that makes all things now. The constancy of the glories of the kingdom of nature may encourage us to depend upon the divine promise for the continuance of the glories of the kingdom of

grace, for *this is as the waters of Noah*, Isa. liv. 9. Let us observe here,

1. The glories of the kingdom of nature, and infer thence how happy they are that have this God, the God of nature, to be their God for ever and ever. Take notice, (1.) Of the steady and regular motion of the heavenly bodies, which God is the first Mover and supreme Director of; *He gives the sun for a light by day;* (v. 35.) not only made it at first to be so, but still gives it to be so, for the light and heat, and all the influences of the sun, continually depend upon its great Creator. He gives *the ordinances of the moon and stars for a light by night;* their motions are called *ordinances*, both because they are regular and by rule, and because they are determined and under rule. See Job. xxxviii. 31.—

33. (2.) Take notice of the government of the sea, and the check that is given to its proud billows; *The Lord of hosts divides the sea*, or, as some read it, *settles the sea, when the waves thereof roar;* (*Divide, et impera—Divide, and rule;*) when it is most tossed, God keeps it within compass, (Jer. v. 22.) and soon quiets it and makes it calm again. The power of God is to be magnified by us, not only in maintaining the regular motions of the heavens, but in controlling the irregular motions of the seas. (3.) Take notice of the vastness of the heavens and the unmeasurable extent of the firmament; he must needs be a great God, who manages such a great world as this; *the heavens above cannot be measured,* (v. 37.) and yet God fills them. (4.) Take notice of the mysteriousness even of that part of the creation in which our lot is cast, and which we are most conversant with. *The foundations of the earth cannot be searched out beneath*, for the Creator *hangs the earth upon nothing*, (Job. xxvi. 7.) and we know not how the foundations thereof are fastened, Job. xxxviii. 6. (5.) Take notice of the immovable steadfastness of all these; (v. 36.) *These ordinances cannot depart from before God;* he has all the hosts of heaven and earth continually under his eye, and all the motions of both; he has established them, and they abide, *abide according to his ordinance, for all are his servants*, Ps. cxix. 90, 91. The heavens are often clouded, and the sun and moon often eclipsed, the earth may quake and the sea be tossed, but they all keep their place, are moved, but not removed. Herein we must acknowledge the power, goodness and faithfulness of the Creator.

2. The securities of the kingdom of grace inferred from hence; we may be confident of this very thing, that *the seed of Israel shall not cease from being a nation*, for the spiritual Israel, the gospel-church, shall be a *holy nation, a peculiar people*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. When Israel according to the flesh is no longer a nation, the *children of the promise are counted for the seed*, (Rom. ix. 8.) and God will not cast off all the seed of Israel, no, not for all that they have done, though they have done very wickedly, v. 37. He justly might cast them off, but he will not. Though he cast them out from their land, and cast them down for a time, yet he will not cast them off. Some of them he casts off, but not all; to this the apostle seems to refer, (Rom. xi. 1.) *Hath God cast away his people? God forbid* that we should think so! For, (v. 5.) *at this time there is a remnant*, enough to save the credit of the promise, that *God will not cast off all the seed of Israel*, though many among them throw away themselves by unbelief. Now we may be assisted in the belief of this, by considering, (1.) That the God that has undertaken the preservation of the church, is a God of almighty power, who *upholds all things by his almighty word.* Our help stands in his name, who made heaven and earth, and therefore can do any thing. (2.) That God would not take all this care of the world, but that he designs to have some glory to himself out of it; and how shall

ne have it but by securing to himself a church in it, a people that *shall be to him for a name and a praise?* (3.) That if the order of the creation therefore continues firm, because it was well fixed at first, and is not altered because it needs no alteration, the method of grace shall for the same reason continue invariable, as it was at first well settled. (4.) That he who has promised to preserve a church for himself, has approved himself faithful to the word which he has spoken, concerning the stability of the world. He that is true to his covenant with Noah and his sons, because he established it for an *everlasting covenant*, (Gen. ix. 9, 16.) will not, we may be sure, be false to his covenant with Abraham and his seed, his spiritual seed, for that also is an *everlasting covenant*. Even that which they have done amiss, though they have done much, shall not prevail to defeat the gracious intentions of the covenant. See Ps. lxxxix. 30, &c.

II. The rebuilding of Jerusalem which was now in ruins, and the enlargement and establishment of that, shall be an earnest of these great things that God will do for the gospel-church, the *heavenly Jerusalem*, v. 38.—40. *The days will come*, though they may be long in coming, 1. When Jerusalem shall be entirely built again, as large as ever it was; the dimensions are here exactly described, by the places through which the circumference passed; and, no doubt, the wall which Nehemiah built, and which, the more punctually to fulfil the prophecy, began about the *tower of Hananeel*, here mentioned, (Neh. iii. 1.) enclosed as much ground as is here intended, though we cannot certainly determine the places here called *the gate of the corner, the hill Gareb*, &c. 2. When, being built, it shall be consecrated to God and to his service. *It shall be built to the Lord*, (v. 38.) and even the suburbs and fields adjacent *shall be holy unto the Lord*. It shall not be polluted with idols as formerly, but God shall be praised and honoured there; the whole city shall be as it were one temple, one holy place, as the new Jerusalem is, which *therefore* has no temple, because it is all temple. 3. Being thus built by virtue of the promise of God, and then devoted to the praise of God, *it shall not be plucked up, or thrown down, any more for ever*, it shall continue very long; the time of the new city from the return to its last destruction being full as long as that of the old from David to the captivity. But this promise was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel-church, which, as it is the spiritual Israel, and therefore God will not cast it off, so it is the holy city, and therefore all the powers of men *shall not pluck it up, or throw it down*. It may lie waste for a time, as Jerusalem did, but shall recover itself, shall weather the storm, and gain its point, *and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*.

CHAP. XXXII.

In this chapter, we have, I. Jeremiah imprisoned for foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity of king Zedekiah, v. 1. . 5. II. We have him buying land, by divine appointment, as an assurance that in due time a happy end should be put to the present troubles, v. 6. . 15. III. We have his prayer, which he offered up to God upon that occasion, v. 16. . 25. IV. We have a message which God thereupon intrusted him to deliver to the people. 1. He must foretell the utter destruction of Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, v. 26. . 35. But, 2. At the same time he must assure them that, though the destruction was total, it should not be final, but that at length their posterity should recover the peaceable possession of their own land, v. 36. . 44. The predictions of this chapter, both threatenings and promises, are much the same with what we have already met with again and again, but here are some circumstances that are very particular and remarkable.

1. **T**HE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of

Zedekiah king of Judah, which *was* the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar. 2. For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem: and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which *was* in the king of Judah's house. 3. For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; 4. And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes; 5. And he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith the LORD: though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper. 6. And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 7. Behold, Hanameel, the son of Shallum, thine uncle, shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth; for the right of redemption is thine to buy it. 8. So Hanameel, mine uncle's son, came to me in the court of the prison, according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this *was* the word of the LORD. 9. And I bought the field of Hanameel, mine uncle's son, that *was* in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, *even* seventeen shekels of silver. 10. And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed *him* the money in the balances. 11. So I took the evidence of the purchase, *both* that which was sealed *according* to the law and custom, and that which was open. 12. And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. 13. And I charged Baruch before them, saying, 14. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, (both which is sealed,) and this evidence which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days: 15. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Houses, and fields, and vineyards, shall be possessed again in this land.

It appears by the date of this chapter, that we are

now coming very nigh to that fatal year which completed the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. God's judgments came gradually upon them, but they not meeting him by repentance in the way of his judgments, he proceeded in his controversy till all was laid waste, which was in the eleventh year of Zedekiah; now what is here recorded happened in the tenth. The king of Babylon's army had now invested Jerusalem, and was carrying on the siege with vigour, not doubting but in a little time to make themselves masters of it, while the besieged had taken up a desperate resolution not to surrender, but to hold it out to the last extremity. Now,

I. Jeremiah prophesies that both the city and the court shall fall into the hands of the king of Babylon. He tells them expressly, that the besiegers shall take the city as a prize, for God, whose city it was in a peculiar manner, will give it into their hands, and put it out of his protection; (v. 3.) that though Zedekiah attempt to make his escape, he shall be overtaken, and shall be delivered a prisoner into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, shall be brought into his presence, to his great confusion and terror, he having made himself so obnoxious by breaking his faith with him; he shall hear the king of Babylon pronounce his doom, and see with what fury and indignation he will look upon him; *his eyes shall behold his eyes*, v. 4. That Zedekiah shall be carried to Babylon, and continue a miserable captive there, *until God visit him*, till God put an end to his life by a natural death, as Nebuchadnezzar had long before put an end to his days, by putting out his eyes. Note, Those that live in misery may be truly said to be visited in mercy, when God by death takes them home to himself. And, *lastly*, he foretells that all their attempts to force the besiegers from their trenches should be ineffectual; *Though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper*; how should they, when God did not fight for them? v. 5. See *ch. xxxiv. 2, 3*.

II. For prophesying thus, he is imprisoned, not in the common gaol, but in the more creditable prison that was within the verge of the palace, *in the king of Judah's house*, and there not closely confined, but in *custodia libera*, in the court of the prison, where he might have good company, good air, and good intelligence brought him, and would be sheltered from the abuses of the mob; but, however, it was a prison, and Zedekiah shut him up in it for prophesying as he did, v. 2, 3. So far was he from *humbling himself before Jeremiah*, as he ought to have done, (2 Chron. xxxvi. 12.) that he *hardened himself* against him. Though he had formerly so far owned him to be a prophet, as to desire him to *inquire of the Lord for them*, (*ch. xxi. 2*.) yet now he chides him for prophesying, (v. 3.) and shuts him up in prison, perhaps not with design to punish him any further, but only to restrain him from prophesying any further, which was crime enough. Silencing God's prophets, though it is not so bad as mocking and killing them, is yet a great affront to the God of heaven. See how wretchedly the hearts of sinners are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Persecution was one of the sins for which God was now contending with them, and yet Zedekiah persists in it even now that he was in the depth of distress. No providences, no afflictions, will of themselves part between men and their sins, unless the grace of God work with them. Nay, some are made worse by those very judgments that should make them better.

III. Being in prison, he purchases a piece of ground from a near relation of his, that lay in Anathoth, v. 6, 7, &c. One would not have expected, 1. That a prophet should concern himself so far in the business of this world; but why not? Though

ministers must not entangle themselves, yet they may concern themselves, in the affairs of this life. 2. That one who had neither wife nor children should buy land; we find, (*ch. xvi. 2*.) that he had no family of his own, yet he may purchase for his own use while he lives, and leave it to the children of his relations when he dies. 3. One would little have thought that a prisoner should be a purchaser; how should he get money beforehand to buy land with? It is probable that he lived frugally, and saved something out of what belonged to him as a priest, which is no blemish at all to his character; but we have no reason to think that the people were kind, or that his being beforehand was owing to their generosity. Nay, 4. It was most strange of all, that he should buy a *piece of land*, when he himself knew that the whole land was now to be laid waste, and fall into the hands of the Chaldeans; and then what good would this do him? But it was the will of God that he should buy it, and he submitted, though the money seemed to be thrown away. His kinsman came to offer it him; it was not of his own seeking; he coveted not to lay house to house and field to field, but Providence brought it to him, and it was, probably, a good bargain; besides, the *right of redemption* belonged to him, (v. 8.) and if he refused, he did not do the kinsman's part. It is true, he might lawfully refuse; but, being a prophet, in a thing of this nature, he must do that which would be for the honour of his profession; *it became him to fulfil all righteousness*. It was a land that lay within the suburbs of a priest's city, and if he should refuse it, there was danger lest, in these times of disorder, it might be sold to one of another tribe, which was contrary to the law, to prevent which it was convenient for him to buy it. It would likewise be a kindness to his kinsman, who, probably, was at this time in great want of money. Jeremiah had but a little, but what he had he was willing to lay it out in such a manner as might tend most to the honour of God and the good of his friends and country, which he preferred before his own private interests. Observe,

(1.) How fairly the bargain was made. When Jeremiah knew by Hanameel's coming to him, as God had foretold he would, that *it was the word of the Lord*, that it was his mind that he should make this purchase, he made no more difficulty of it, but *bought the field*. And, [1.] He was very honest and exact in paying the money. He *weighed him the money*, did not press him to take it upon his report, though he was his near kinsman, but weighed it to him, current money. It was seventeen *shekels of silver*, amounting to about forty shillings of our money. It was, probably, but a little field, and of small yearly value, when the purchase was so low; besides, the *right of inheritance* was in Jeremiah, so that he was only to buy out his kinsman's life, the reversion was his already. Some think this was only the earnest of a greater sum; but we shall not wonder at the smallness of the price, if we consider what scarcity there was of money at this time, and how little lands were counted upon. [2.] He was very prudent and discreet in preserving the writings. They were subscribed *before witnesses*; one copy was *sealed up*, the other was *open*. One was the original, the other the counterpart; or perhaps that which was *sealed up* was for his own private use, the other that was *open* was to be laid up in the public register of conveyances, for any person concerned to consult. Due care and caution, in things of this nature, might prevent a great deal of injustice and contention. The deeds of purchase were lodged in the hands of Baruch, before witnesses, and he was ordered to lay them up in an *earthen vessel*, (an emblem of the nature of all the securities this world can pretend to give us, brittle things, and

soon broken,) that they might *continue many days*, for the use of Jeremiah's heirs, after the return out of captivity; for they might then have the benefit of this purchase. Purchasing reversions may be a kindness to those that come after us, and a good man thus *lays up an inheritance for his children's children*.

(2.) What was the design of having this bargain made? It was to signify that though Jerusalem was now besieged, and the whole country was likely to be laid waste, yet the time should come, when *houses and fields and vineyards should be again possessed in this land*, v. 15. As God appointed Jeremiah to confirm his predictions of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, by his own practice in living unmarried, so he now appointed him to confirm his predictions of the future restoration of Jerusalem, by his own practice in purchasing this field. Note, It concerns ministers to make it to appear in their whole conversation, that they do themselves believe that which they preach to others; and that they may do so, and impress it the deeper upon their hearers, they must many a time deny themselves, as Jeremiah did in both these instances. God having promised that this land should again come into the possession of his people, Jeremiah will, in behalf of his heirs, put in for a share. Note, It is good to manage even our worldly affairs in faith, and to do common business with an eye to the providence and promise of God. Lucius Florus relates it as a great instance of the bravery of the Roman citizens, that in the time of the second Punic war, when Hannibal besieged Rome, and was very near making himself master of it, a field on which part of his army lay, being offered to sale at that time, was immediately purchased, in a firm belief that the Roman valour would raise the siege, *lib. 2. cap. 6*. And have not we much more reason to venture our all upon the word of God, and to embark in Zion's interests, which will undoubtedly be the prevailing interests at last? *Non si male nunc et olim sic erit—Though now we suffer, we shall not suffer always*.

16. Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying, 17. Ah, Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm, *and* there is nothing too hard for thee: 18. Thou shewest loving-kindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: The Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, *is* his name. 19. Great in counsel, and mighty in work: (for thine eyes *are* open upon all the ways of the sons of men; to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings;) 20. Which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, *even* unto this day, and in Israel, and among *other* men; and hast made thee a name, as at this day; 21. And hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt, with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with great terror; 22. And hast given them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them,

a land flowing with milk and honey; 23. And they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not thy voice, neither walked in thy law: they have done nothing of all that thou commandedst them to do; therefore thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them. 24. Behold the mounts, they are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, thou seest *it*. 25. And thou hast said unto me, O Lord God, Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.

We have here Jeremiah's prayer to God, upon occasion of the discoveries God had made to him of his purposes concerning this nation, to pull it down, and in process of time to build it up again, which puzzled the prophet himself, who, though he delivered his messages faithfully, yet, in reflecting upon them, was at a loss within himself how to reconcile them; in that perplexity he poured out his soul before God in prayer, and so gave himself ease. That which disturbed him was, not the bad bargain he seemed to have made for himself in purchasing a field that he was likely to have no good of; but the case of his people, for whom he was still a kind and faithful intercessor, and he was willing to hope that if God had so much mercy in store for them hereafter as he had promised, he would not proceed with so much severity against them now as he had threatened. Before Jeremiah went to prayer, he delivered the deeds that concerned his new purchase to Baruch; which may intimate to us, that when we are going to worship God, we should get our minds as clear as may be from the cares and encumbrances of this world. Jeremiah was in prison, in distress, in the dark about the meaning of God's providences, and then he prays. Note, Prayer is a salve for every sore. Whatever is a burthen to us, we may by prayer cast it upon the Lord, and then be easy.

In this prayer, or meditation,

1. Jeremiah adores God and his infinite perfections, and gives him the glory due to his name as the Creator, Upholder, and Benefactor, of the whole creation; thereby owning his irresistible power, that he *can* do what he will, and his incontestable sovereignty, that he *may* do what he will, v. 17.—19. Note, When at any time we are perplexed about the particular methods and dispensations of Providence, it is good for us to have recourse to our first principles, and to satisfy ourselves with the general doctrines of God's wisdom, power, and goodness. Let us consider, as Jeremiah does here, (1.) That God is the Fountain of all being, power, life, motion, and perfection; He *made the heaven and the earth with his outstretched arm*; and therefore who can control him? Who dares contend with him? (2.) That with him nothing is impossible, no difficulty insuperable; *Nothing is too hard for thee*. When human skill and power is quite nonplussed, *with God are strength and wisdom* sufficient to master all the opposition. (3.) That he is a God of boundless, bottomless mercy; that is his darling attribute; it is his goodness that is his glory; "Thou not only art kind, but thou *showest loving-kindness*, not to a few, to here and there one, but to *thousands*, thousands of persons, thousands of generations." (4.)

That he is a God of impartial and inflexible justice. His reprieves are not pardons, but if in mercy he spares the parents, that they may be led to repentance, yet such a hatred has he to sin, and such a displeasure against sinners, that he *recompenses their iniquity into the bosom of their children*, and yet does them no wrong: so hateful is the unrighteousness of man, and so jealous of its own honour is the righteousness of God. (5.) That he is a God of universal dominion and command; He is *the great God*, for he is the *mighty God*; and might among men makes them great. He is *the Lord of hosts*, of all hosts, that is his name, and he answers to his name, for all the hosts of heaven and earth, of men and angels, are at his beck. (6.) That he contrives every thing for the best, and effects every thing as he contrived it; He is *great in counsel*; so vast are the reaches, and so deep are the designs, of his wisdom; and he is *mighty in doing*, according to the counsel of his will. Now such a God as this is not to be quarrelled with. His service is to be constantly adhered to, and all his disposals cheerfully acquiesced in.

2. He acknowledges the universal cognizance God takes of all the actions of the children of men, and the unerring judgment he passes upon them; (v. 19.) *Thine eyes are open upon all the sons of men*, wherever they are, beholding the evil and the good, and upon all *their ways*, both the course they take, and every step they take, not as an unconcerned Spectator, but as an observing Judge, *to give every one according to his ways, and according to his deserts*, which are *the fruit of his doings*, for men shall find God as they are found of him.

3. He recounts the great things God had done for his people Israel formerly. (1.) He brought them out of Egypt, that house of bondage, with *signs and wonders* which remain, if not in the marks of them, yet in the memorials of them, even *unto this day*; for it would never be forgotten, not only in Israel, who were reminded of it every year by the ordinance of the passover, but *among other men*; all the neighbouring nations spake of it, as that which redounded exceedingly to the glory of the God of Israel, and made him a name *as at this day*. This is repeated again, (v. 21.) that God *brought them forth*, not only with comforts and joys to them, but with glory to himself, *with signs and wonders*, (witness the ten plagues,) with a *strong hand*, too strong for the Egyptians themselves, and with a *stretched-out arm*, that reached Pharaoh, proud as he was, and *with great terror* to them and all about them. This seems to refer to Deut. iv. 34. (2.) He brought them into Canaan, that good land, that land *flowing with milk and honey*; he *swore to their fathers to give it them*, and because he would perform his oath, he did give it to the children, (v. 22.) and they *came in*, and *possessed it*. Jeremiah mentions this both as an aggravation of their sin and disobedience, and also as a plea with God to work deliverance for them. Note, It is good for us often to reflect upon the great things that God did for his church formerly, especially in the first erecting of it, that work of wonder.

4. He bewails the rebellions they had been guilty of against God, and the judgments God had brought upon them for these rebellions. It is a sad account he here gives of the ungrateful conduct of that people toward God. He had done every thing that he promised them to do, (they had acknowledged it, 1 Kings viii. 56.) but they had *done nothing of all that he commanded them to do*; (v. 23.) they made no conscience of any of his *laws*, they *walked not in them*, paid no respect to any of his calls by his prophets, for they *obeyed not his voice*. And therefore he owns that God was righteous in *causing all this evil to come upon them*. The city is besieged, is attacked

by the sword without, is weakened and wasted by the *famine and pestilence* within, so that it is ready to fall into the hands of the Chaldeans that fight against it; (v. 24.) it is *given into their hands*, v. 25. Now, (1.) He compares the present state of Jerusalem with the divine predictions, and finds that what God *has spoken*, is *come to pass*. God had given them fair warning of it before; if they had regarded this, the ruin had been prevented; but if they will not do what God has commanded, they can expect no other than that he should do what he has threatened. (2.) He commits the present state of Jerusalem to the divine consideration and compassion; (v. 24.) *Behold the mounts, or ramparts, or the engines*, which they make use of to batter the city, and beat down the wall of it. And again, "*Behold, thou seest it, and takest cognizance of it*. Is this the city that thou hast chosen to put thy name there? And shall it be thus abandoned?" He neither complains of God for what he had done, nor prescribes to God what he should do, but desires he would behold their case, and is pleased to think that he does behold it. Whatever trouble we are in, upon a personal or public account, we may comfort ourselves with this, that God sees it, and sees how to remedy it.

5. He seems desirous to be let further into the meaning of the order that God had now given him, to purchase his kinsman's field: (v. 25.) "*Though the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans*, no man is likely to enjoy what he has, yet *thou hast said unto me, Buy thee the field*." As soon as he understood that it was the mind of God, he did it, and made no objections, was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; but when he had done it, he desired better to understand why God had ordered him to do it, because the thing looked strange and unaccountable. Note, Though we are bound to follow God with an implicit obedience, yet we should endeavour that it may be more and more intelligent obedience. We must never dispute God's statutes and judgments, but we may and must inquire, *What mean these statutes and judgments?* Deut. vi. 20.

26. Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, 27. Behold, I *am* the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me? 28. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it. 29. And the Chaldeans, that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it, with the houses upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink-offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger. 30. For the children of Israel, and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the LORD. 31. For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury, from the day that they built it, even unto this day, that I should remove it from before my face; 32. Because of all the evil of the children of Israel, and of the children of Judah, which they have done to

provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 33. And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction. 34. But they set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to defile it. 35. And they built the high places of Baal, which *are* in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through *the fire* unto Molech, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. 36. And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; 37. Behold, I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: 38. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: 39. And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: 40. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. 41. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart, and with my whole soul. 42. For thus saith the LORD, Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. 43. And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, *It is desolate without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.* 44. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal *them*, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the LORD.

We have here God's return to Jeremiah's prayer, designed to quiet his mind, and make him easy; and it is a full discovery of the purposes of God's wrath against the present generation, and the purposes of his grace concerning the future generations. Jeremiah knew not how to *sing both of mercy and judgment*, but God here teaches to sing unto him of both.

When we know not how to reconcile one word of God with another, we may yet be sure that both are true, both are pure, both shall be made good, and not one iota or tittle of either shall fall to the ground. When Jeremiah was ordered to buy the field in Anathoth, he was willing to hope that God was about to revoke the sentence of his wrath, and to order the Chaldeans to raise the siege. "No," says God, "the execution of the sentence shall go on, Jerusalem shall be laid in ruins." Note, Assurances of future mercy must not be interpreted as securities from present troubles. But, lest Jeremiah should think that his being ordered to buy this field intimated that all the mercy God had in store for his people, after their return, was only that they should have the possession of their own land again; he further acquaints him that that was but a type and figure of those spiritual blessings which should then be abundantly bestowed upon them, unspeakably more valuable than fields and vineyards. So that in this *word of the Lord*, which came here to Jeremiah, first as dreadful threatenings, and then as precious promises as perhaps any we have in the Old Testament; life and death, good and evil, are here set before us; let us consider and choose wisely.

I. The ruin of Judah and Jerusalem is here pronounced; the decree is gone forth, and shall not be recalled.

1. God here asserts his own sovereignty and power; (v. 27.) *Behold, I am Jehovah*, a self-existent, self-sufficient Being; *I am that I am; I am the God of all flesh*, of all mankind; here called *flesh*, because weak, and unable to contend with God, (Ps. lvi. 4.) and because wicked and corrupt, and unapt to comply with God. God is the Creator of all, and makes what use he pleases of all. He that is the God of Israel is the *God of all flesh*, and of the *spirits of all flesh*; and, if Israel were cast off, could raise up a people to his name out of some other nation. If he be the *God of all flesh*, he may well ask, *Is any thing too hard for me?* What can he do, from whom all the powers of men are derived, on whom they depend, and by whom all their actions are directed and governed? Whatever he designs to do, whether in wrath or in mercy, nothing can hinder him, or defeat his designs.

2. He abides by what he had often said of the destruction of Jerusalem by the king of Babylon; (v. 28.) *I will give this city into his hand*, now that he is grasping at it, and *he shall take it*, and make a prey of it, v. 29. *The Chaldeans shall come and set fire to it*, shall burn it and all the *houses in it*, God's house not excepted, nor the king's neither.

3. He assigns the reason for these severe proceedings against the city that had been so much in his favour. It is sin, it is that, and nothing else, that ruins it. (1.) They were impudent and daring in sin. They *offered incense to Baal*, not in corners, as men ashamed or afraid of being discovered, but upon the *tops of their houses*, (v. 29.) in defiance of God's justice. (2.) They designed an affront to God herein. They did it to *provoke me to anger*, v. 29. *They have only provoked me to anger with the works of their hands*, v. 30. They could not promise themselves any pleasure, profit, or honour out of it, but did it on purpose to offend God. And again, (v. 32.) *All the evil which they have done was to provoke me to anger*. They knew he was a jealous God in the matters of his worship, and there they resolved to try his jealousy and dare him to his face. Jerusalem has been to me a *provocation of my anger and fury*, v. 31. Their conduct in every thing was provoking. (3.) They began betimes, and had continued all along provoking to God. *They have done evil before me from their youth*, ever since they were first formed into a peo-

ple; (v. 30.) witness their murmurings and rebellions in the wilderness. And as for Jerusalem, though it was the *holy city*, it has been a *provocation* to the holy God from the day that they built it, even to this day, v. 31. O what reason have we to lament the little honour God has from this world, and the great dishonour that is done him, when even in Judah, where *he is known and his name is great*, and in Salem where his *tabernacle is*, there was always that found, that was a provocation to him! (4.) All orders and degrees of men contributed to the common guilt, and therefore were justly involved in the common ruin. Not only the *children of Israel*, that had revolted from the temple, but the *children of Judah* too, that still adhered to it. Not only the common people, the *men of Judah*, and *inhabitants of Jerusalem*, but those that should have reprov'd and restrained sin in others, were themselves ringleaders in it, their *kings and princes, their priests and prophets*. (5.) God had again and again called them to repentance, but they turned a deaf ear to his calls, and rudely turned their back on him that called them, though he was their Master, to whom they were bound in duty, and their Benefactor, to whom they were bound in gratitude and interest, v. 33. "*I taught them better manners, with as much care as ever any tender parent taught a child, rising up early, and teaching them, studying to adapt the teaching to their capacities, taking them betimes, when they might have been most pliable, but all in vain; they turned not the face to me, would not so much as look upon me, nay, they turned the back upon me;*" an expression of the highest contempt; *as he called them, like froward children, so they went from him*, Hos. xi. 2. *They have not hearkened to receive instruction*, they regarded not a word that was said to them, though it was designed for their own good. (6.) There was in their idolatries an impious contempt of God, for, (v. 34.) *They set their abominations, their idols, which they knew to be in the highest degree abominable to God, they set them in the house which is called by my name, to defile it*. They had their idols not only in their high places and groves, but even in God's temple. (7.) They were guilty of the most unnatural cruelty to their own children, for they *sacrificed them to Molech*, v. 35. Thus because they *liked not to retain God in their knowledge, but changed his glory into shame*, they were justly given up to vile affections, and stript of natural ones, and their glory was turned into shame.

And lastly, What was the consequence of all this? [1.] *They caused Judah to sin*, v. 35. The whole country was infected with the contagious idolatries and iniquities of Jerusalem. [2.] They brought ruin upon themselves. It was as if they had done it on purpose that God *should remove them from before his face*; (v. 31.) they would throw themselves out of his favour.

II. The restoration of Judah and Jerusalem is here promised, v. 36, &c. God will in judgment remember mercy, and there will a time come, a set time, to favour Zion.

Observe, 1. The despair to which this people were now at length brought. When the judgment was threatened at a distance, they had no fear; when it attacked them, they had no hope. They said concerning the city, (v. 36.) *It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon*, not by any cowardice or ill conduct of ours, but by the sword, famine, and pestilence. Concerning the country, they said, with vexation, (v. 43.) *It is desolate without man or beast*, there is no relief, there is no remedy. *It is given into the hand of the Chaldeans*. Note, Deep security commonly ends in deep despair; whereas those that keep up a

holy fear at all times, have a good hope to support themselves in the worst of times.

2. The hope that God gives them of mercy which he had in store for them hereafter. Though their carcases must fall in captivity, yet their children after them should again see this good land, and the goodness of God in it.

(1.) They shall be brought up from their captivity, and shall come, and settle again in this land, v. 37. They had been under God's *anger and fury, and great wrath*; but now they shall partake of his grace, and love, and great favour. He had *dispersed them*, and driven them *into all countries*; those that fled dispersed themselves; those that fell into the enemies' hands were dispersed by them, in policy, to prevent combinations among them. God's hand was in both: but now God will find them out, and *gather them out of all the countries whither they were driven*, as he promised in the law, (Deut. xxx. 3, 4.) and the saints had prayed, Ps. cvi. 47. Neh. i. 9. He had banished them, but he will *bring them again to this place*, which they could not but have an affection for. For many years past, while they were in their own land, they were continually exposed, and terrified with the alarms of war; but now *I will cause them to dwell safely*. Being reformed, and returned to God, neither their own consciences within, nor their enemies without, shall be a *terror to them*. He promises, (v. 41.) *I will plant them in this land assuredly*; not only I will certainly do it, but they shall here enjoy a holy security and repose, and they shall take root here, shall be *planted in stability*, and not again be unfixed and unshaken.

(2.) God will renew his covenant with them, a covenant of grace, the blessings of which are spiritual, and such as will work good things in them, to qualify them for the great things God intended to do for them. It is called an *everlasting covenant*, (v. 40.) not only because God will be for ever faithful to it, but because the consequences of it will be for everlasting. For, doubtless, here the promises look further than to Israel according to the flesh, and are sure to all believers, to every *Israelite indeed*. Good Christians may apply them to themselves, and plead them with God, may claim the benefit of them, and take the comfort of them.

[1.] God will own them for his, and make over himself to them to be theirs; (v. 38.) *They shall be my people*. He will make them his, by working in them all the characters and dispositions of his people, and then he will protect and guide and govern them as his people. And, to make them truly, completely, and eternally happy, *I will be their God*. They shall serve and worship God as theirs, and cleave to him only, and he will approve himself theirs. All he is, all he has, shall be engaged and employed for their good.

[2.] God will give them a *heart to fear him*, v. 39. That which he requires of those whom he takes into covenant with him as his people, is, that they fear him, that they reverence his majesty, dread his wrath, stand in awe of his authority, pay homage to him, and give him the glory due unto his name. Now what God requires of them he here promises to work in them, pursuant to his choice of them as his people. Note, As it is God's prerogative to fashion men's hearts, so it is his promise to his people to fashion theirs aright, and a heart to fear God is indeed a good heart, and well-fashioned. It is repeated again, (v. 40.) *I will put my fear in their hearts*, work in them gracious principles and dispositions, that shall influence and govern their whole conversation. Teachers may put good things into our heads, but it is God only that can put them into our hearts, that can work in us *both to will and to do*.

[3.] He will give them *one heart and one way*. In order to their walking in *one way*, he will give them *one heart*; as the heart is, so will the way be, and both shall be one; that is, *First*, They shall be each of them one with themselves; *one heart* is the same with a *new heart*, Ezek. xi. 19. The heart is *then* one, when it is fully determined for God, and entirely devoted to God; when the eye is single, and God's glory alone aimed at; when our hearts are fixed, trusting in God, and we are uniform and universal in our obedience to him; then the heart is one, and the way one; and unless the heart is thus steady, the goings will not be steadfast. From this promise we may take direction and encouragement to pray, with David, (Ps. lxxxvi. 11.) *Unite my heart to fear thy name*; for God says, *I will give them one heart, that they may fear me*. *Secondly*, They shall be all of them one with each other. All good Christians shall be incorporated into one body, Jews and Gentiles shall become *one sheep-fold*; and they shall all, as far as they are sanctified, have a disposition to love one another; the gospel they profess, having in it the strongest inducements to mutual love, and the Spirit that dwells in them, being the Spirit of love. Though they may have different apprehensions about lesser things, they shall be all one in the great things of God, being renewed after the same image; though they may have many paths, they have but *one way*, that of serious godliness.

[4.] He will effectually provide for their perseverance in grace, and the perpetuating of the covenant between him and them. They would have been happy when they were first planted in Canaan, like Adam in paradise, if they had not departed from God. And therefore now that they are restored to their happiness, they shall be confirmed in it, by the preventing of their departures from God, and this will complete their bliss. *First*, God will never leave nor forsake them; *I will not turn away from them to do good*. Earthly princes are fickle, and their greatest favourites have fallen under their frowns; but God's mercy endures for ever; whom he loves, he loves to the end. God may seem to turn from his people, (Isa. liv. 8.) but even then he does not turn from doing and designing them good. *Secondly*, They shall never leave nor forsake him; that is the thing we are in danger of; we have no reason to distrust God's fidelity and constancy, but our own. And therefore it is here promised, that God will give them a *heart to fear him for ever*, all days, to be in his fear every day, and all the day long, (Prov. xxiii. 17.) and to continue so to the end of their days. He will put such a principle into their hearts, that they shall not depart from him. Even those who have given up their names to God, if they be left to themselves, will depart from him; but the fear of God, ruling in the heart, will prevent their departure. That, and nothing else, will do it. If we continue close and faithful to God, it is owing purely to his almighty grace, and not to any strength or resolution of our own.

[5.] He will entail a blessing upon their seed, will give them grace to fear him, *for the good of them, and of their children after them*. As their departures from God had been to the prejudice of their children, so their adherence to God should be to the advantage of their children. We cannot better consult the good of posterity, than by setting up, and keeping up, the fear and worship of God in our families.

[6.] He will take a pleasure in their prosperity, and will do every thing to advance it; (v. 41.) *I will rejoice over them to do them good*. God will therefore do them good, because he rejoices over them: they are dear to him, he makes his boast of them, and therefore will not only do them good, but

will delight in doing them good. When he punishes them, it is with reluctance; *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* But when he restores them it is with satisfaction, he rejoices in doing them good. We ought therefore to serve him with pleasure, and to rejoice in all opportunities of serving him. He is himself a cheerful Giver, and therefore loves a cheerful servant. *I will plant them* (says God) *with my whole heart, and with my whole soul*. He will be intent upon it, and take delight in it; he will make it the business of his providence to settle them again in Canaan, and the various dispensation of providence shall concur to it. All things shall appear at last so to have been working for the good of the church, that it will be said, The Governor of the world is entirely taken up with the care of his church.

[7.] These promises shall as surely be performed as the foregoing threatenings were, and the accomplishment of those, notwithstanding the security of the people, might confirm their expectation of the performance of these, notwithstanding their present despair; (v. 42.) *As I have brought all this great evil upon them*, pursuant to the threatenings, and for the glory of divine justice, *so I will bring upon them all this good*, pursuant to the promise, and for the glory of divine mercy. He that is faithful to his threatenings will much more be so to his promises; and he will comfort his people according to the time he has afflicted them. The churches shall have rest after the days of adversity.

[8.] As an earnest of all this, houses and lands shall again take a good price in Judah and Jerusalem, and though now they are a drug, there shall again be a sufficient number of purchasers; (v. 43, 44.) *Fields shall be bought in this land*, and people will covet to have lands here rather than any where else. Lands, wherever they lie, will go off, not only in the places about Jerusalem, but in the cities of Judah and of Israel too, whether they lie on mountains, or in valleys, or in the south, in all parts of the country, *men shall buy fields, and subscribe evidences*. Trade shall revive, for they shall have money enough to buy land with; husbandry shall revive, for those that have money shall covet to lay it out upon lands; laws shall again have their due course, for they shall *subscribe evidences, and seal them*. This is mentioned to reconcile Jeremiah to his new purchase; though he had bought a piece of ground and could not go to see it, yet he must believe that this was the pledge of many a purchase, and those but faint resemblances of the purchased possessions in the heavenly Canaan, reserved for all those who have God's fear in their hearts, and do not depart from him.

CHAP. XXXIII.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the foregoing chapter—to confirm the promise of the restoration of the Jews, notwithstanding the present desolations of their country, and dispersions of their people. And these promises have, both in type and tendency, a reference as far forward as to the gospel-church, to which this second edition of the Jewish church was at length to resign its dignities and privileges. It is here promised, I. That the city shall be rebuilt and re-established in *statu quo*—in its former state, v. 1.-6. II. That the captives, having their sins pardoned, shall be restored, v. 7, 8. III. That this shall redound very much to the glory of God, v. 9. IV. That the country shall have both joy and plenty, v. 10.-14. V. That way shall be made for the coming of the Messiah, v. 15, 16. VI. That the house of David, the house of Levi, and the house of Israel, shall flourish again, and be established, and all three in the kingdom of Christ; a gospel-ministry and the gospel-church shall continue while the world stands, v. 17.-26.

1. **M**OREOVER, the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah the second

time, while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison, saying, 2. Thus saith the LORD, the maker thereof, the LORD that formed it, to establish it; the LORD is his name; 3. Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. 4. For thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, which are thrown down by the mounts, and by the sword; 5. They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but *it is* to fill them with the dead bodies of men, whom I have slain in mine anger, and in my fury, and for all whose wickedness I have hid my face from this city. 6. Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth. 7. And I will cause the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Israel, to return, and will build them as at the first. 8. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. 9. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness, and for all the prosperity, that I procure unto it.

Observe here,

I. The date of this comfortable prophecy which God intrusted Jeremiah with. It is not exact in the time, only that it was after that in the foregoing chapter, when things were still growing worse and worse; it was the *second time*; *God speaketh once, yea, twice*, for the encouragement of his people. We are not only so disobedient, that we have need of *precept upon precept* to bring us to our duty, but so distrustful, that we have need of promise upon promise to bring us to our comfort. This word, as the former, *came to Jeremiah when he was in prison*. Note, No confinement can deprive God's people of his presence; no locks or bars can shut out his gracious visits; nay, oftentimes *as their afflictions abound, their consolations much more abound*, and they have the most reviving communications of his favour then, when the world frowns upon them. Paul's sweetest epistles were those that bore date out of a prison.

II. The prophecy itself. A great deal of comfort is wrapt up in it for the relief of the captives, to keep them from sinking into despair. Observe,

1. Who it is that secures this comfort to them, *v.* 2. It is the Lord, the Maker thereof, the Lord that framed it. He is the Maker and Former of heaven and earth, and therefore has all power in his hands; so it refers to Jeremiah's prayer, *ch.* xxxii. 17. He is the Maker and Former of Jerusalem, of Zion, built them at first, and therefore *can* rebuild them, built them for his own praise, and therefore *will*. He *formed it, to establish it*, and therefore it shall be established till those things be introduced, which cannot be shaken, but shall remain for ever. He is

the Maker and Former of this promise; he has laid the scheme for Jerusalem's restoration, and he that has formed it will establish it, he that has made the promise will make it good; for *Jehovah is his name*; a God giving being to his promises by the performance of them; when he does this, he is known by that name, (*Exod.* vi. 3.) a perfecting God; when the heavens and the earth were finished, then, and not till then, the Creator is called *Jehovah*, *Gen.* ii. 1.

2. How this comfort must be obtained and fetched in; by prayer; (*v.* 3.) *Call upon me, and I will answer thee*. The prophet, having received some intimations of this kind, must be humbly earnest with God for further discoveries of his kind intentions. He had prayed, (*ch.* xxxii. 16.) but he must pray again. Note, Those that expect to receive comforts from God must continue instant in prayer; we must *call upon him*, and then he *will answer us*; Christ himself must *ask*, and it *shall be given him*, *Ps.* ii. 8. *I will show thee great and mighty things*, give thee a clear and full prospect of them; *hidden things*, which, though in part discovered already, yet *thou knowest not*, thou canst not understand, or give credit to. Or, this may refer not only to the prediction of these things, which Jeremiah, if he desire it, shall be favoured with, but to the performance of the things themselves, which the people of God, encouraged by this prediction, must pray for. Note, Promises are given, not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, prayer. See *Ezek.* xxxvi. 37.

3. How deplorable the condition of Jerusalem was, which made it necessary that such comforts as these should be provided for it; and notwithstanding which, its restoration should be brought about in due time; (*v.* 4, 5.) *The houses of this city, not excepting those of the kings of Judah, are thrown down by the mounts, or engines of battery, and by the sword, or axes, or hammers*. It is the same word that is used, *Ezek.* xxvi. 9. *With his axes he shall break down thy towers*. The strongest, stateliest houses, and those that were best furnished, were levelled with the ground. The fifth verse comes in a parenthesis, giving a further instance of the present calamitous state of Jerusalem. They that *came to fight with the Chaldeans*, to beat them off from the siege, did more hurt than good, provoked the enemy to be more fierce and furious in their assaults, so that the houses in Jerusalem were *filled with the dead bodies of men*, who died of the wounds they received in sallying out upon the besiegers. God says, that they were such *as he had slain in his anger*, for the enemies' sword was his sword, and their anger his anger. But it seems, the men that were slain were generally such as had distinguished themselves by their wickedness, for they were the very men for whose wickedness God did now hide himself *from this city*; so that he was just in all he brought upon them.

4. What the blessings are which God has in store for Judah and Jerusalem, such as will redress all their grievances.

(1.) Is their state diseased? Is it wounded? God will provide effectually for the healing of it, though the disease was thought mortal and incurable, *ch.* viii. 22. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; but, (*v.* 6.) *I will bring it health and cure*, I will prevent the death, remove the sickness, and set all to rights again," *ch.* xxx. 17. Note, Be the case ever so desperate, if God undertake the cure, he will effect it. The sin of Jerusalem was the sickness of it; (*Isa.* i. 6.) its reformation therefore will be its recovery. And the following words tell us how that is wrought; "*I will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth*; I will give it them in due time, and give them an encouraging prospect of it in the mean time." Peace stands here

for all good; *peace and truth* are peace according to the promise, and in pursuance of that: or, *peace and truth* are peace and the true religion; peace and the true worship of God, in opposition to the many falsehoods and deceits by which they had been led away from God. We may apply it more generally, and observe, [1.] That peace and truth are the great subject-matter of divine revelation. These promises here lead us to the gospel of Christ, and in that God has revealed to us *peace and truth*, the method of true *peace*; truth to direct us, peace to make us easy. *Grace and truth*, and abundance of both, *come by Jesus Christ*. Peace and truth are the life of the soul, and Christ came, *that we might have that life*, and *might have it more abundantly*. Christ rules by the power of truth, (John xviii. 17.) and by it he gives *abundance of peace*, Ps. lxxii. 7.—lxxxv. 10. [2.] That the divine revelation of peace and truth brings health and cure to all those that by faith receive it: it heals the soul of the diseases it has contracted, as it is a means of sanctification, John xvii. 17. *He sent his word, and healed them*. And it puts the soul into good order, and keeps it in frame, and fit for the employments and enjoyments of the spiritual and divine life.

(2.) Are they scattered and enslaved, and is their nation laid in ruins? “*I will cause their captivity to return*, (v. 7.) both that of Israel and that of Judah;” (for though those who returned under Zerubbabel were chiefly of Judah, and Benjamin, and Levi, yet afterward many of all the other tribes returned;) “*and I will rebuild them, as I built them at first*.” When they by repentance do their first works, God will by their restoration do his first works.

(3.) Is sin the procuring cause of all their troubles? That shall be pardoned and subdued, and so the root of the judgments shall be killed, v. 8. [1.] By sin they are become filthy, and odious to God’s holiness, but God will cleanse them, and purify them from their iniquity; as those that were ceremonially unclean, and were therefore shut out from the tabernacle, when they were sprinkled with the *water of purification*, had liberty of access to it again, so had they to their own land and the privileges of it, when God had *cleansed them from their iniquities*. In allusion to that sprinkling, David prays, *Purge me with hyssop*. [2.] By sin they are become guilty, and obnoxious to his justice; but he will *pardon all their iniquities*, will remove the punishment to which for sin they were bound over. All who by sanctifying grace are cleansed from the filth of sin, by pardoning mercy are freed from the guilt of it.

(4.) Have both their sins and their sufferings turned to the dishonour of God? Their reformation and restoration shall redound as much to his praise, v. 9. Jerusalem, thus rebuilt, Judah, thus re-peopled, *shall be to me a name of joy*, as pleasing to God as ever they have been provoking, and *a praise and an honour before all the nations*. They, being thus restored, shall glorify God by their services, and he shall glorify himself by his favours. This renewed nation shall be as much a reputation to religion as formerly it has been a reproach to it. The nations *shall hear all of the good* that God has wrought in them by his grace, and *of all the good* he has wrought for them by his providence. The wonders of their return out of Babylon shall make as great a noise in the world as ever the wonders of their deliverance out of Egypt did. *And they shall fear and tremble for all this goodness*. [1.] The people of God themselves *shall fear and tremble*; they shall be much surprised at it, shall be afraid of offending so good a God, and of forfeiting his favour, Hos. iii. 5. *They shall fear the Lord and his goodness*. [2.] The neighbouring nations *shall fear* because of the

prosperity of Jerusalem; shall look upon the growing greatness of the Jewish nation as really formidable, and shall be afraid of making them their enemies. When the church is *fair as the moon*, and *clear as the sun*, she is *terrible as an army with banners*.

10. Thus saith the LORD, Again there shall be heard in this place (which ye say *shall be desolate without man and without beast, even in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, that are desolate without man, and without inhabitant, and without beast*.) 11. The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness; the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride; the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD *is good*; for his mercy *endureth* for ever: *and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD*. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD. 12. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Again in this place, which is desolate without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be a habitation of shepherds causing *their flocks to lie down*. 13. In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, and in the cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks pass again under the bands of him that *telleth them*, saith the LORD. 14. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel, and to the house of Judah. 15. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. 16. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this *is the name* wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.

Here is a further prediction of the happy state of Judah and Jerusalem after their glorious return out of captivity, issuing gloriously at length in the kingdom of the Messiah.

1. It is promised, that the people who were long in sorrow, shall again be filled with joy. Every one concluded now, that the country would lie for ever desolate, that *no beast* should be found in the land of Judah, *no inhabitants in the streets of Jerusalem*, and, consequently, there would be nothing but universal and perpetual melancholy; (v. 10.) yet, though weeping may endure for a time, joy will return. It was threatened, (ch. vii. 34. and xvi. 9.) that *the voice of joy and gladness should cease* there; but here it is promised that they shall revive again, that *the voice of joy and gladness should be heard* there, because *the captivity shall be returned*; for then was *their mouth filled with laughter*, Ps. cxxvi. 1, 2. (1.) There shall be common joy there, *the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride*; marriages shall again be celebrated, as formerly, with songs, which in Babylon they had laid aside,

for their harps were hung on the willow trees. (2.) There shall be *religious* joy there; temple-songs shall be revived, *the Lord's songs*, which they could not sing in a *strange land*. There shall be heard, in their private houses, and in the cities of Judah, as well as in the temple, *the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts*. Note, Nothing is more the praise and honour of a people, than to have God praised and honoured among them. This shall complete the mercy of their return and restoration, that with it they shall have hearts to be thankful for it, and give God the glory of it, the glory both of the power and of the goodness by which it is effected; they shall praise him both as *the Lord of hosts*, and as the God who is *good*, and whose *mercy endures for ever*. This, though a song of old, yet, being sung upon this fresh occasion, will be a new song. We find this literally fulfilled at their return out of Babylon, Ezra iii. 11. They sang together in praising the Lord, *because he is good, for his mercy endures for ever*. The public worship of God shall be diligently and constantly attended upon; *They shall bring the sacrifice of praise to the house of the Lord*. All the sacrifices were intended for the praise of God, but this seems to be meant of the spiritual sacrifice of humble adorations and joyful thanksgivings, *the calves of our lips*, (Hos. xiv. 2.) which *shall please the Lord better than an ox or a bullock*. The Jews say, that in the days of the Messiah all sacrifices shall cease, but *the sacrifices of praise*, and to those days this promise has a further reference.

2. It is promised, that the country, which had lain long depopulated, should be replenished and stocked again. It was now desolate, *without man, and without beast*; but, after their return, the pastures shall again be clothed with flocks, Ps. lxxv. 13. *In all the cities of Judah and Benjamin there shall be a habitation of shepherds*, v. 12, 13. This speaks, (1.) The wealth of the country, after their return. It shall not be a habitation of beggars, who have nothing, but of shepherds and husbandmen, men of substance, with good stocks upon the ground they are returned to.

(2.) The peace of the country. It shall not be a habitation of soldiers, nor shall there be tents and barracks set up to lodge them, but there shall be shepherd's tents; for they shall hear no more the alarms of war, nor shall there be any to make even the shepherds afraid. See Ps. cxlv. 13, 14. (3.) The industry of the country, and their return to their original plainness and simplicity, from which, in the corrupt ages, they had sadly degenerated. The seed of Jacob, in their beginning, gloried in this, that they were *shepherds*, (Gen. xlvii. 3.) and so they shall now be again, giving themselves wholly to that innocent employment, *causing their flocks to lie down*, (v. 12.) and to *pass under the hands of him that telleth them*; (v. 13.) for though their flocks are numerous, they are not numberless, nor shall they omit to number them, that they may know if any be missing, and may seek after it. Note, It is the prudence of those who have ever so much of the world, to keep an account of what they have. Some think that they *pass under the hand of him that telleth them*, that they may be *tithed*, Lev. xxvii. 32. Then we may take the comfort of what we have, when God has had his dues out of it. Now because it seemed incredible that a people, reduced as now they were, should ever recover such a degree of peace and plenty as this, here is subjoined a general ratification of these promises; (v. 14.) *I will perform that good thing which I have promised*. Though the promise may sometimes work slowly towards an accomplishment, it works surely. *The days will come*, though they are long in coming.

3. To crown all these blessings which God has in store for them, here is a promise of the Messiah,

and of that everlasting righteousness which he should bring in, (v. 15, 16.) and, probably, this is *that good thing*, that great good thing, which, in the latter days, days that were yet to come, God would perform, as he had promised to Judah and Israel, and which their return out of captivity, and their settlement again in their own land, respected and promoted. *From the captivity to Christ* is one of the famous periods, Matth. i. 17. This promise of the Messiah we had before; (ch. xxiii. 5, 6.) and there it came in as a confirmation of the promise of the shepherds which God would set over them, which would make one think that the promise here concerning the shepherds and their flocks, which introduces it, is to be understood figuratively. Christ is here prophesied of, (1.) As a rightful King; he is a *Branch of righteousness*, not a Usurper, for he *grows up unto David*, descends from his loins, with whom the covenant of royalty was made, and is that Seed with whom that covenant should be established, so that his title is unexceptionable. (2.) As a righteous King, righteous in enacting laws, waging wars, and giving judgment; righteous in vindicating those that suffer wrong, and punishing those that do wrong; *He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land*. This may point at Zerubbabel in the type, who governed with equity, not as Jehoiakim had done; (ch. xxii. 17.) but it has a further reference to him to whom all judgment is committed, and who shall *judge the world in righteousness*. (3.) As a King that shall protect his subjects from all injury. By him *Judah shall be saved* from wrath and the curse, and being so saved, *Jerusalem shall dwell safely*, quiet from the fear of evil, and enjoying a holy security and serenity of mind, in a dependence upon the conduct of this Prince of peace, this Prince of their peace. (4.) As a King that shall be praised by his subjects; *"This is the name whereby they shall call him"*; (so the Chaldee reads it, the Syriac, and vulgar Latin;) *"this name of his they shall celebrate and triumph in, and by this name they shall call upon him"*. It may be read, more agreeably to the original, *This is he who shall call her, The Lord our Righteousness*, as Moses's altar is called *Jehovah-nissi*, (Exod. xvii. 15.) and Jerusalem, *Jehovah-shammah*, (Ezek. xlvi. 35.) intimating that they glory in Jehovah as present with them, and *their Banner*; so here the city is called, *The Lord our Righteousness*, because they glory in Jehovah as their Righteousness. That which was before said to be the name of Christ, (says Mr. Gataker,) is here made the name of Jerusalem, the city of the Messiah, the church of Christ. He it is that imparts righteousness to her, for he is *made of God to us righteousness*, and she, by bearing that name, professes to have her whole righteousness, not from herself, but from him, *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength*! (Isa. xlv. 24.) and *we are made the righteousness of God in him*. The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall have this name of the Messiah so much in their mouths, that they shall themselves be called by it.

17. For thus saith the Lord, David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; 18. Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me, to offer burnt-offerings, and to kindle meat-offerings, and to do sacrifice continually. 19. And the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah, saying, 20. Thus saith the Lord, If you can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and

night in their season; 21. *Then* may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. 22. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured; so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me. 23. Moreover, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, 24. Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? Thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. 25. Thus saith the LORD, If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; 26. Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.

Three of God's covenants, that of royalty with David and his seed, that of the priesthood with Aaron and his seed, and that of peculiarity with Abraham and his seed, seemed to have been all broken and lost while the captivity lasted; but it is here promised, that, notwithstanding that interruption and discontinuance for a time, they shall all three take place again, and the true intents and meaning of them all shall be abundantly answered in the New Testament blessings typified by those conferred on the Jews after their return out of captivity.

1. The covenant of royalty shall be secured, and the promises of it shall have their full accomplishment, in the kingdom of Christ, the Son of David, v. 17. The throne of Israel was overturned in the captivity, the crown was fallen from their head, there was not a man to sit on the throne of Israel, Jeconiah was written childless. After their return, the house of David made a figure again; but it is in the Messiah that this promise is performed, that *David shall never want a man to sit on the throne of Israel*; and that David shall have *always a Son to reign upon his throne*. For as long as the Man Christ Jesus sits on the right hand of the throne of God, rules the world, and rules it for the good of the church, to which he is a quickening Head, and glorified Head over all things, as long as he is *King upon the holy hill of Zion*, David does not want a successor, nor is the covenant with him broken. When the First-begotten was brought into the world, it was declared concerning him, that *the Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever*, Luke i. 33.

For the confirmation of this, it is promised, (1.) That the *covenant with David* shall be as firm as the *ordinances of heaven*; to the stability of which that of God's promise is compared, *ch. xxxi. 35, 36*. There is a covenant of nature, by which the common course of providence is settled, and on which it is founded, here called, a *covenant of the day and the night*, (v. 20, 25.) because that is one of the articles of it, That there shall be *day and night in their season*, according to the distinction put between them in the creation, when God divided between the light and the darkness, and esta-

blished their mutual succession, and a government to each, that *the sun should rule by day, and the moon and stars by night*, (Gen. i. 4, 5, 16.) which establishment was renewed after the flood, (Gen. viii. 22.) and has continued ever since, Ps. xix. 2. *The morning and the evening* have both of them their regular outgoings; (Ps. lxxviii. 8.) *the day-spring knows its place, knows its time*, and keeps both, so do *the shadows of the evening*; and while the world stands, this course shall not be altered, this *covenant shall not be broken*. *The ordinances of heaven and earth*, (of this communication between heaven and earth, the dominion of these ordinances of heaven upon the earth,) which God has appointed, (v. 25. compare Job xxxviii. 33.) shall never be disappointed. Thus firm shall the covenant of redemption be with the Redeemer—God's Servant, but David our King, v. 21. This intimates that Christ shall have a church on earth to the world's end, he shall see a seed in which he shall prolong his days till time and days shall be no more. Christ's *kingdom is an everlasting kingdom*, and when *the end cometh*, and not till then, it shall be *delivered up to God, even the Father*. But it intimates that the condition of it in this world shall be intermixed and counter-changed, prosperity and adversity succeeding each other, as light and darkness, day and night. But this is plainly taught us, that, as sure as we may be, that though the sun will set to-night, it will rise again to-morrow morning, whether we live to see it or no, so sure we may be, that though the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world may for a time be clouded and eclipsed by corruptions and persecutions, yet it will shine forth again, and recover its lustre, in the time appointed. (2.) That *the seed of David* shall be as numerous as *the host of heaven*, the spiritual seed of the Messiah, that shall be born to him by the efficacy of his gospel, and his Spirit working with it; *from the womb of the morning he shall have the dew of their youth*, to be his *willing people*, Ps. cx. 3. Christ's seed are not, as David's were, his successors, but his subjects; yet the day is coming when they also shall reign with him; (v. 22.) *As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, so will I multiply the seed of David*, so that there shall be no danger of the kingdom's being extinct, or extirpated for want of heirs. The children are numerous; and if children, then heirs.

2. The covenant of priesthood shall be secured, and the promises of that also shall have their full accomplishment. This seemed likewise to be forgotten during the captivity, when there was no altar, no temple-service, for the priests to attend upon; but this also shall revive. It did so; immediately upon their coming back to Jerusalem, there were priests and Levites ready to offer burnt-offerings, and to do sacrifice continually, (Ezra iii. 2, 3.) as he here promised, v. 18. But that priesthood soon grew corrupt, the covenant of Levi was profaned, (as appears Mal. ii. 8.) and in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans it came to a final period. We must therefore look elsewhere for the performance of this word, that the covenant with the Levites, the priests, God's ministers, shall be as firm, and last as long, as the covenant *with the day and the night*. And we find it abundantly performed, (1.) In the priesthood of Christ, which supersedes that of Aaron, and is the substance of that shadow. While that great *High Priest of our profession* is always appearing in the *presence of God for us*, presenting the virtue of his blood by which he made atonement in the incense of his intercession, it may truly be said, that *the Levites do not want a man before God to offer continually*, Heb. viii. 3. *He is a Priest for ever*. The covenant of the priesthood is called a *covenant of peace*, (Numb. xxv. 12.) of *life and peace*, Mal. ii. 5. Now we

are sure that this covenant is not broken, or in the least weakened, while Jesus Christ is himself our Life and our Peace. This covenant of priesthood is here again and again joined with that of royalty, for Christ is a *Priest upon his throne*, as Melchizedek. (2.) In a settled gospel-ministry. While there are faithful ministers to preside in religious assemblies, and to offer up the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, *the priests, the Levites* do not want successors, and such as *have obtained a more excellent ministry*. The apostle makes those *that preach the gospel*, to come in the room of those that *served at the altar*, 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. (3.) In all true believers, who are a *holy priesthood, a royal priesthood*, (1 Pet. ii. 5, 9.) *who are made to our God kings and priests*, (Rev. i. 6.) *they offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God*, and themselves, in the first place, *living sacrifices*. Of these Levites, this promise here must be understood, (v. 22.) that they shall be as numerous *as the sand of the sea*, the same that is promised concerning Israel in general; (Gen. xxii. 17.) for all God's spiritual Israel are spiritual priests, Rev. v. 9, 10.—vii. 9, 13.

3. The covenant of peculiarity likewise shall be secured, and the promises of that covenant shall have their full accomplishment in the gospel-Israel. Observe, (1.) How this covenant was looked upon as broken during the captivity, v. 24. God asks the prophet, "Hast thou not heard, and dost thou not consider, *what this people have spoken?*" Either the enemies of Israel, who triumphed in the extirpation of a people that had made such a noise in the world, or the unbelieving Israelites themselves, *this people*, among whom thou dwellest, they have broken covenant with God, and then quarrel with him, as if he had not dealt faithfully with them. *The two families which the Lord hath chosen*, Israel and Judah, whereas they were but one when he chose them, *he hath even cast them off*. "*Thus have they despised my people*, despised the privilege of being my people, as if it were a privilege of no value at all. The neighbouring nations despised them, as now *no more a nation*, but the ruins of a nation, and looked upon all their honour as laid in the dust; but, (2.) See how firm the covenant stands notwithstanding, as firm as that with day and night; sooner will God suffer day and night to cease, than he will *cast away the seed of Jacob*. This cannot refer to the seed of Jacob according to the flesh, for they are cast away, but to the Christian church, in which all these promises were to be lodged, as appears by the apostle's discourse, Rom. xi. 1, &c. Christ is that Seed of David, that is to be perpetual Dictator to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and as this people shall never want such a King, so this King shall never want such a people. Christianity shall continue in the dominion of Christ, and the subjection of Christians to him, till day and night come to an end. And as a pledge of this, that promise is again repeated, *I will cause their captivity to return*; and, having brought them back, *I will have mercy on them*. Whom this promise refers to, appears, Gal. vi. 16. where all that *walk according to the gospel-rule*, are made to be the *Israel of God*, on whom *peace and mercy* shall be.

CHAP. XXXIV.

In this chapter, we have two messages which God sent by Jeremiah. 1. One, to foretell the fate of Zedekiah king of Judah, that he should fall into the hands of the king of Babylon, that he should live a captive, but should at last die in peace in his captivity, v. 1-7. 2. Another, to read the doom both of prince and people for their treacherous dealings with God, in bringing back their servants into bondage, whom they had released according to the law, and so playing fast and loose with God. They had walked *at all adventures* with God, (v. 8. . 11.)

and therefore God would walk *at all adventures* with them, in bringing the Chaldean army upon them again, then when they began to hope that they were got clear of them, v. 12. . 22.

1. **T**HE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, (when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people, fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities thereof,) saying, 2. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Go, and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him; Thus saith the LORD. Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire. 3. And thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon. 4. Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah; Thus saith the LORD of thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword; 5. But thou shalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee; and they will lament thee, saying, Ah, lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the LORD. 6. Then Jeremiah the prophet spake all these words unto Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem. 7. When the king of Babylon's army fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish, and against Azekah: for these defended cities remained of the cities of Judah.

This prophecy concerning Zedekiah was delivered to Jeremiah, and by him to the parties concerned, before he was shut up in the prison, for we find this prediction here made the ground of his commitment, as appears by the recital of some passages out of it, ch. xxxii. 4.

Observe, 1. The time when this message was sent to Zedekiah; it was when *the king of Babylon*, with all his forces, some out of *all the kingdoms of the earth* that were within his jurisdiction, *fought against Jerusalem, and the cities thereof*, (v. 1.) designing to destroy them, having often plundered them. The cities that now remained, and yet held out, are named, (v. 7.) *Lachish and Azekah*. This intimates that things were now brought to the last extremity, and yet Zedekiah obstinately stood it out, his heart being hardened to his destruction.

2. The message itself that was sent him.

(1.) Here is a threatening of wrath. He is told that again, which he had been often told before, that the city shall be taken by the Chaldeans, *and burnt with fire*, (v. 2.) that he shall himself fall into the enemy's hands, shall be made a prisoner, shall be brought before that furious prince Nebuchadnezzar, and be carried away captive into Babylon; (v. 3.) yet Ezekiel prophesied that he *should not see Babylon*; nor did he, for his eyes were put out, Ezek. xii. 13. This Zedekiah brought upon himself from God by his other sins, and from Nebuchadnezzar by his breaking of his faith with him.

(2.) Here is a mixture of mercy. He shall die a captive, but he *shall not die by the sword*, he shall die a natural death; (v. 4.) he shall end his days with some comfort, *shall die in peace*, v. 5. He never had been one of the worst of the kings, but we are willing to hope that what evil he had *done in the sight of the Lord*, he repented of it in his captivity, as Manasseh had done, and it was forgiven to him; and, God being reconciled to him, he might truly be said to *die in peace*. Note, A man may die in a prison, and yet *die in peace*. Nay, he shall end his days with some reputation, more than one would expect, all things considered. He shall be buried *with the burnings of his fathers*, with the respect usually shown to their kings, especially those that had done good in Israel. It seems, in his captivity he had conducted himself so well toward his own people, that they were willing to do him this honour, and toward Nebuchadnezzar, that he suffered it to be done. If Zedekiah had continued in his prosperity, perhaps he would have grown worse, and would have *departed at last without being desired*; but his afflictions wrought such a change in him, that his death was looked upon as a great loss. It is better to live and die penitent in a prison, than live and die impenitent in a palace. *They will lament thee, saying, Ah, Lord!* an honour which his brother Jehoiakim had not, *ch. xxii.* 18. The Jews say that they lamented thus over him, *Alas! Zedekiah is dead, who drank the dregs of all the ages that went before him*, who suffered for the sins of his ancestors, the measure of iniquity being filled up in his days. They shall thus lament him, *saith the Lord, for I have pronounced the word*; and what God hath spoken shall without fail be made good.

3. Jeremiah's faithfulness in delivering this message; though he knew it would be ungrateful to the king, and might prove, as indeed it did, dangerous to himself, (for he was clapped up for it,) yet he *spake all these words to Zedekiah*, v. 6. It is a mercy to great men to have those about them that will deal faithfully with them, and tell them the evil consequences of their evil courses, that they may reform, and live.

8. *This is the word that came unto Jeremiah from the LORD*, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which *were* at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them; 9. That every man should let his man-servant, and every man his maid-servant, *being a Hebrew or a Hebrewess*, go free; that none should serve himself of them, *to wit*, of a Jew his brother. 10. Now, when all the princes, and all the people which had entered into the covenant, heard that every one should let his man-servant, and every one his maid-servant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more; then they obeyed, and let *them* go. 11. But afterwards they turned, and caused the servants, and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids. 12. Therefore the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 13. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the

land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying, 14. At the end of seven years, let ye go every man his brother a Hebrew, which hath been sold unto thee; and, when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear. 15. And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour: and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name: 16. But ye turned, and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom ye had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids. 17. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the LORD, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. 18. And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, 19. The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf; 20. I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life; and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth. 21. And Zedekiah king of Judah, and his princes, will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you. 22. Behold, I will command, saith the LORD, and cause them to return to this city; and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire: and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant.

We have here another prophecy upon a particular occasion, the history of which we must take notice of, as necessary to give light to the prophecy.

I. When Jerusalem was closely besieged by the Chaldean army, the princes and people agreed upon a reformation in one instance, and that was concerning their servants.

1. The law of God was very express, that those of their own nation should not be held in servitude above seven years, but after they had served one

apprenticeship, they should be discharged, and have their liberty; yea, though they had sold themselves into servitude for the payment of their debts, or though they were *sold by the judges* for the punishment of their crimes. This difference was put between their brethren and strangers, that those of other nations, taken in war, or bought with money, might be held in perpetual slavery, they and theirs; but their brethren must serve but for seven years at the longest. This God calls the covenant that he had made with them, when he *brought them out of the land of Egypt*, v. 13, 14. This was the first of the judicial laws which God gave them, (Exod. xxi. 2.) and there was good reason for that law. (1.) God had put honour upon that nation, and he would have them thus to preserve the honour of it themselves, and to put a difference between it and other nations. (2.) God had brought them out of slavery in Egypt, and he would have them thus to express their grateful sense of that favour, by letting those go, to whom their houses were *houses of bondage*, as Egypt had been to their forefathers. That deliverance is therefore mentioned here, (v. 13.) as the ground of that law. Note, God's compassions towards us should engage our compassions towards our brethren; we must release as we are released, forgive as we are forgiven, and relieve as we are relieved. And this is called a *covenant*: for our performance of the duty required is the condition of the continuance of the favours God has bestowed.

2. This law they and their fathers had broken; their worldly profit swayed more with them than God's command or covenant. When their servants had lived seven years with them, they understood their business, and how to apply themselves to it, better than they did when they first came to them, and therefore they would then by no means part with them, though God himself by his law had made them free; *Your fathers hearkened not to me in this matter*, (v. 14.) so that from the days of their fathers they had been in this trespass; and they thought they might do it, because their fathers did it, and their servants had by disuse lost the benefit of the provision God made for them; whereas against an express law, especially against an express law of God, no custom, usage, or prescription, is to be admitted in plea. For this sin of theirs, and their fathers, God now brought them into servitude, and justly.

3. When they were besieged, and closely shut in, by the army of the Chaldeans, they, being told of their fault in this matter, immediately reformed, and let go all their servants that were entitled to their freedom by the law of God; as Pharaoh, who, when the plague was upon him, consented to *let the people go*, and bound themselves in a covenant to do so. (1.) The prophets faithfully admonished them concerning their sin. From them they heard that they should let their Hebrew servants *go free*, v. 10. They might have read it themselves in the book of the law, but did not, or did not heed it, therefore the prophets told them what the law was. See what need there is of the preaching of the word; people must hear the word preached, because they will not make the use they ought to make of the word written. (2.) All orders and degrees of men concurred in this reformation. The *king*, and the *princes*, and *all the people*, agreed to *let go their servants*, whatever loss or damage they might sustain by so doing. When the king and princes led in this good work, the people could not for shame but follow. The example and influence of great men would go very far towards extirpating the most inveterate corruptions. (3.) They bound themselves by a solemn oath and covenant, that they would do this, whereby they engaged themselves to

God and one another. Note, What God has bound us to by his precept, it is good for us to bind ourselves to by our promise. This covenant was very solemn: it was made in a sacred place, *made before me, in the house which is called by my name*, (v. 15.) in the special presence of God, the tokens of which, in the temple, ought to strike an awe upon them, and make them very sincere in their appeals to him. It was ratified by a significant sign; they *cut a calf in two, and passed between the parts thereof*, (v. 18, 19.) with this dreadful imprecation, "Let us be in like manner cut in sunder, if we do not perform what we now promise." This calf was, probably, offered up in sacrifice to God, who was thereby made a Party to the covenant. When God covenanted with Abram, for the ratification of it, a *smoking furnace* and a *burning lamp passed between the pieces* of the sacrifice, in allusion to this federal rite, Gen. xv. 17. Note, That we may effectually oblige ourselves to our duty, it is good to alarm ourselves with the apprehensions of the terror of the wrath and curse to which we expose ourselves, if we live in the contempt of it, that wrath which will *cut sinners asunder*; (Matth. xxiv. 51.) and sensible signs may be of use to make the impressions of it deep and durable, as here. (4.) They conformed themselves herein to the command of God, and their covenant with him; they did *let their servants go*, though at this time, when the city was besieged, they could very ill spare them. Thus they did *right in God's sight*, v. 15. Though it was their trouble that drove them to it, yet he was well pleased with it; and if they had persevered in this act of *mercy to the poor*, to their poor servants, it might have been a lengthening of their tranquillity, Dan. iv. 27.

II. When there was some hope that the siege was raised, and the danger over, they repented of their repentance, undid the good they had done, and forced the servants they had released, into their respective services again. 1. The *king of Babylon's army was now gone up from them*, v. 21. Pharaoh was bringing an army of Egyptians to oppose the progress of the king of Babylon's victories, upon the tidings of which the Chaldeans raised the siege for a time, as we find, *ch. xxxvii. 5. They departed from Jerusalem*. See how ready God was to put a stop to his judgments, upon the first instance of reformation, so slow is he to anger, and so swift to show mercy. As soon as ever they let their servants go free, God let them go free. 2. When they began to think themselves safe from the besiegers, they made their servants come back into subjection to them, (v. 11.) and again, v. 16. This was a great abuse to their servants, to whom servitude would be more irksome, after they had had some taste of the pleasures of liberty. It was a great shame to themselves, that they could not keep in a good mind when they were in it. But it was especially an affront to God; in doing this, they *polluted his name*, v. 16. It was a contempt of the command he had given them, as if that were of no force at all, but they might either keep it, or break it, as they thought fit. It was a contempt of the covenant they had made with him, and of that wrath which they had imprecated on themselves, in case they should break that covenant. It was jesting with God Almighty, as if he could be imposed upon by fallacious promises, which, when they had gained their point, they would look upon themselves no longer obliged by. It was *lying to God with their mouths*, and *flattering him with their tongues*. It was likewise a contempt of the judgments of God, and setting them at defiance; as if, when once the course of them was stopped a little and interrupted, they would never proceed again, and the judgment would never be revived. Whereas re

prieves are so far from being pardons, that if they be abused thus, and sinners take encouragement from them to return to sin, they are but preparatives for heavier strokes of divine vengeance.

III. For this treacherous dealing with God, they are here severely threatened; *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.* Those that think to put a cheat upon God by a dissembled repentance, a fallacious covenant, and a partial temporary reformation, will prove in the end to have put the greatest cheat upon their own souls; for *the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.* It is here threatened with an observable air of displeasure against them, 1. That since they had not given liberty to their servants to go where they pleased, God would give all his judgments liberty to take their course against them without control; (v. 17.) *You have not proclaimed liberty to your servants.* Though they had done it, (v. 10.) yet they might truly be said not to have done it, because they did not stand to it, but undid it again; and *Factum non dicitur quod non perseverant—That is not said to be done, which does not last.* The righteousness that is forsaken and turned away from, shall be forgotten, and *not mentioned,* any more than if it had never been; (Ezek. xviii. 24.) *“Therefore I will proclaim a liberty for you; I will discharge you from my service, and put you out of my protection, which those forfeit that withdraw from their allegiance. You shall have liberty to choose which of these judgments you will be cut off by, sword, famine, or pestilence;”* such a liberty as was offered to David, which put him into a *great strait*, 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. Note, Those that will not be in subjection to the law of God put themselves into subjection to the wrath and curse of God. But this shows what *liberty to sin* really is—it is but a liberty to the sorest judgments. 2. That, since they had brought their servants back into confinement in their houses, God would *make them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth*, where they shall live in servitude, and, being strangers, could not expect the privileges of free-born subjects. 3. That, since they had broken the covenant which they ratified by a solemn imprecation, God would bring on them the evil which they imprecated upon themselves, in case they should break it. Out of their own mouth will he judge them, and so shall their doom be; the penalty of their bond shall be recovered, because they have not performed the condition; for so some read v. 18. *“I will make the men which have transgressed my covenant, as the calf which they cut in twain; I will divide them in sunder as they divided it in sunder.”* 4. That, since they would not let go their servants out of their hands, God would deliver them into the hands of those that hated them. Even the princes and nobles, both of Judah and Jerusalem, of the country and of the city; the eunuchs, chamberlains, or great officers of the court, the priests, and all the people, they had all dealt treacherously with God, and therefore shall all be involved in the common ruin, without exception; (v. 19.) they shall all be *given into the hand of their enemies, that seek, not their wealth only, or their service, but their life.* And they shall have what they seek; but neither shall that content them; when they have their lives, they shall leave *their dead bodies* unburied, a loathsome spectacle to all mankind, and an easy prey to the fowls and beasts, a lasting mark of ignominy being here fastened on them. 5. That, since they had emboldened themselves in returning to their sin, contrary to their covenant, by the retreat of the Chaldean army from them, God would therefore bring it upon them again; *“They are now gone up from you, and your fright is over for the present, but I will command them to face about as they were; they shall return to this city, and take it and burn*

it.”

Note, (1.) As confidence in God is a hopeful presage of approaching deliverance, so security in sin is a sad omen of approaching destruction. (2.) When judgments are removed from a people before they have done their work, leave them, but leave them unhumiliated and unreformed, (it is *cum animo revertendi—with a design to return,*) they do but retreat to come on again with so much the greater force; for when God judges, he will overcome. (3.) It is just with God to disappoint these expectations of mercy which his providence had given cause for, when we disappoint those expectations of duty which our professions, pretensions, and fair promises, had given cause for. If we repent of the good we had purposed, God will *repent of the good he had purposed.* With the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.

CHAP. XXXV.

A variety of methods is tried, and every stone turned, to awaken the Jews to a sense of their sin, and to bring them to repentance and reformation. The scope and tendency of many of the prophet's sermons was to frighten them out of their disobedience, by setting before them what would be the end thereof, if they persisted in it. The scope of this sermon, in this chapter, is to shame them out of their disobedience, if they had any sense of honour left in them for a discourse of this nature to fasten upon. I. He sets before them the obedience of the family of the Rechabites to the commands which were left them by Jonadab their ancestor, and how they persevered in that obedience, and would not be tempted from it, v. 1. II. With this he aggravates the disobedience of the Jews to God, and their contempt of his precepts, v. 12. 15. III. He foretells the judgments of God upon the Jews for their impious disobedience to God, v. 16, 17. IV. He assures the Rechabites of the blessing of God upon them for their pious obedience to their father, v. 18, 19.

1. **T**HE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, 2. Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. 3. Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziah, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites; 4. And I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah, the son of Shalum, the keeper of the door: 5. And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups; and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. 6. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons for ever: 7. Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. 8. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our

days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; 9. Nor to build houses for us to dwell in; neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: 10. But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. 11. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.

This chapter is of an earlier date than many of those before; for what is contained in it, was said and done *in the days of Jehoiakim*; (v. 1.) but then it must be in the latter part of his reign, for it was after the king of Babylon with his army *came up into the land*, (v. 11.) which seems to refer to the invasion mentioned 2 Kings xxiv. 2. which was upon occasion of Jehoiakim's rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar. After the judgments of God had broken in upon this rebellious people, he continued to deal with them by his prophets, to turn them from sin, that his wrath might turn away from them. He endeavours it by the example of the Rechabites, a family that kept distinct by themselves, and were no more numbered with the families of Israel than they with the nations. They were originally Kenites, as appears 1 Chron. ii. 55. *These are the Kenites that came out of Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab.* The Kenites, at least those of them that gained a settlement in the land of Israel, were of the posterity of Hobab, Moses's father-in-law, Judg. i. 16. We find them separated from the Amalekites, 1 Sam. xv. 6. See Judg. iv. 17. One family of these Kenites had their denomination from Rechab; his son, or a lineal descendant from him, was Jonadab, a man famous in his time for wisdom and piety. He flourished in the days of Jehu, king of Israel, near 300 years before this; for there we find him courted by that rising prince, when he affected to appear zealous for God, (2 Kings x. 15, 16.) which he thought nothing more likely to confirm people in the opinion of, than to have so good a man as Jonadab ride in the chariot with him. Now we are told,

I. What the rules of living were, which Jonadab, probably by his last will and testament, in writing, and duly executed, charged his children, and his posterity after him, throughout all generations, religiously to observe; and we have reason to think that they were such as he himself had all his days observed. 1. He forbade them to *drink wine*, according to the law of the Nazarites. Wine is indeed given to *make glad the heart of man*, and we are allowed the sober and moderate use of it; but we are so apt to abuse it, and get hurt by it, and a good man, who has his heart made continually glad with the *light of God's countenance*, has so little need of it for that purpose, (Ps. iv. 6, 7.) that it is a commendable piece of self-denial, either not to use it at all, or very sparingly and medicinally, as Timothy used it, 1 Tim. v. 23. 2. He appointed them to *dwell in tents*, and not to build houses, or purchase lands, or rent, or occupy either, v. 7. This was an instance of strictness and mortification beyond what the Nazarites were obliged to. Tents were mean dwellings, so that this would teach them to be humble; they were cold dwellings, so that this would teach them to be hardy, and not to indulge the body; they were moveable dwellings, so that this would teach them not to think of settling or taking root any where in this world. They must dwell in tents *all their days*, not for a few days, as Israel at the feast of taberna-

cles, not only in summer days, as soldiers and shepherds, but *all their days*. They must from the beginning thus accustom themselves to endure hardness, and then it would be no difficulty to them, no, not under the decays of old age.

Now why did Jonadab prescribe these rules of living to his posterity? It was not merely to show his authority, and to exercise a dominion over them, by imposing upon them what he thought fit; but it was to show his wisdom, and the real concern he had for their welfare, by recommending to them what he knew would be beneficial to them; yet, not tying them by any oath or vow, or under any penalty, to observe these rules, but only advising them to conform to this discipline, as far as they found it for edification, yet to be dispensed with in any case of necessity, as here, v. 11. He prescribed these rules to them, (1.) That they might preserve the ancient character of their family, which, however looked upon by some with contempt, he thought its real reputation. His ancestors had addicted themselves to a pastoral life, (Exod. ii. 16.) and he would have his posterity kept to it, and not degenerated from it, as Israel had done, who originally were shepherds, and dwelt in tents, Gen. xlii. 34. Note, We ought not to be ashamed of the honest employments of our ancestors, though they were but mean. (2.) That they might comport with their lot, and bring their mind to their condition, Moses had put them in hopes that they should be naturalized; (Numb. x. 32.) but, it seems, they were not, they were still *strangers in the land*, (v. 7.) had no inheritance in it, and therefore must live by their employments, which was a good reason why they should accustom themselves to hard fare and hard lodging: for strangers, such as they were, must not expect to live as the landed men, so plentifully and delicately. Note, It is our wisdom and duty to accommodate ourselves to our place and rank, and not aim to live above it. What has been the lot of our fathers, why may we not be content that it should be our lot, and live according to it? *Mind not high things*. (3.) That they might not be envied and disturbed by their neighbours among whom they lived. If they that were strangers should live great, raise estates, and fare sumptuously, the natives would grudge them their abundance, and have a jealous eye upon them, as the Philistines had upon Isaac, (Gen. xxvi. 14.) and would seek occasions to quarrel with them and do them a mischief; therefore he thought it would be their prudence to keep low, for that would be the way to continue long; to live meanly, that they might *live many days in the land where they were strangers*. Note, Humility and contentment in obscurity are often the best policy, and men's surest protection. (4.) That they might be armed against temptations to luxury and sensuality, the prevailing sin of the age and place they lived in. Jonadab saw a general corruption of manners; the drunkards of Ephraim abounded, and he was afraid lest his children should be debauched and ruined by them; and therefore he obliged them to live by themselves, retired in the country; and, that they might not run into any unlawful pleasures, to deny themselves the use even of lawful delights. They must be very sober, and temperate, and abstemious, which would contribute to the health both of mind and body, and to their living many days and easy ones, and such as they might reflect upon with comfort *in the land where they were strangers*. Note, The consideration of this, that we are strangers and pilgrims, should oblige us to abstain from all fleshly lusts, to live above the things of sense, and look upon them with a generous and gracious contempt. (5.) That they might be prepared for times of trouble and calamity, Jonadab might, without a spirit of prophecy, foresee the destruction of a people so wretchedly de-

generated, and he would have his family provided, that, if they could not *in the peace thereof*, yet even in the midst of the *troubles thereof, they might have peace*. Let them therefore have little to lose, and then losing times would be the less dreadful to them: let them sit loose to what they had, and then they might with less pain be stript of it. Note, Those are in the best frame to meet sufferings, who are mortified to the world, and live a life of self denial. (6.) That in general they might learn to live by rule, and under discipline. It is good for us all to do so, and to teach our children to do so. Those that have lived long, as Jonadab, probably, had done, when he left this charge to his posterity, can speak by experience of the vanity of the world, and the dangerous snares that are in the abundance of its wealth and pleasures, and therefore ought to be regarded, when they warn those that come after them to stand upon their guard.

II. We are here told how strictly his posterity observed these rules, *v. 8.—10*. They had in their respective generations all of them *obeyed the voice of Jonadab their father, had done according to all that he commanded them*. They *drank no wine*, though they dwelt in a country where there was plenty of it; their wives and children *drank no wine*, for they that are temperate themselves should take care that all under their charge should be so too. They built no houses, tilled no ground, but lived upon the products of their cattle. This they did, partly in obedience to their ancestor, and out of a veneration they had for his name and authority, and partly from the experience they themselves had of the benefit of living such a mortified life. See the force of tradition, and the influence that antiquity, example, and great names have upon men, and how that which seems very difficult, will by long usage and custom become easy, and in a manner natural.

Now, (1.) As to one of the particulars he had given them in charge, we are here told how in a case of necessity they dispensed with the violation of it; (*v. 11.*) *When the king of Babylon came into the land*, with his army, though they had hitherto dwelt in tents, they now quitted their tents, and came and dwelt in Jerusalem, and in such houses as they could furnish themselves with there. Note, The rules of a strict discipline must not be made too strict, but so as to admit of a dispensation when the necessity of the case calls for it; which, therefore, in making vows of that nature, it is wisdom to provide expressly for, that the way may be made the more clear, and we may not afterward be forced to say, *It was an error*, Eccles. v. 6. Commands of that nature are to be understood with such limitations. These Rechabites had tempted God, and not trusted him, if they had not used proper means for their own safety in a time of common calamity, notwithstanding the law and custom of their family. (2.) As to the other particular, we are here told how, notwithstanding the greatest urgency, they religiously adhered to it. Jeremiah took them into the temple, (*v. 2.*) into a *prophet's chamber* there, rather than into the *chamber of the princes*, that joined to it, because he had a message from God, which would look more like itself, when it was delivered in the *chambers of a man of God*. There he not only asked the Rechabites, Whether they drink any wine, but he set *jots full of wine before them*, and cups to drink out of, made the temptation as strong as possible, and said, "*Drink ye wine*, ye shall have it on free cost; ye have broken one of the rules of your order, in coming to live at Jerusalem; why may ye not break this too; and when ye are in the city, do as they there do?" But they peremptorily refused, they all agreed in the refusal; "*No, we will drink no wine*; for with us it is against the law." The prophet knew very well they would deny it, and

when they did, urged it no further, for he saw they were stedfastly resolved. Note, Those temptations are of no force with men of confirmed sobriety, which yet daily overcome such as, notwithstanding their convictions, are of no resolution in the paths of virtue.

12. Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, 13. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Go and tell the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words! saith the LORD. 14. The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me. 15. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers; but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me. 16. Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me: 17. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered. 18. And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you; 19. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.

The trial of the Rechabites' constancy was intended but for a sign; now here we have the application of it.

1. The Rechabites' observance of their father's charge to them is made use of as an aggravation of the disobedience of the Jews to God. Let them see it, and be ashamed. The prophet asks them, in God's name, "*Will ye not at length receive instruction?*" *v. 13*. Will nothing affect you? Will nothing fasten upon you? Will nothing prevail to discover sin and duty to you? You see how obedient the Rechabites are to their father's commandment; (*v. 14.*) but *you have not inclined your ear to me*, (*v. 15.*) though one might much more reasonably expect that the people of God should have obeyed him, than that the sons of Jonadab should have

obeyed him; and the aggravation is very high, for, (1.) The Rechabites were obedient to one who was but a man like themselves, who had but the wisdom and power of a man, and was only the father of their flesh; but the Jews were disobedient to an infinite and eternal God, who had an absolute authority over them, as the Father of their spirits. (2.) Jonadab was long since dead, and was ignorant of them, and could neither take cognizance of their disobedience to his orders, nor give correction for it: but God lives for ever, to see how his laws are observed, and is in a readiness to revenge all disobedience. (3.) The Rechabites were never put in mind of their obligations to their father; but God often sent his prophets to his people, to put them in mind of their duty to him, and yet they would not do it. This is insisted on here as a great aggravation of their disobedience; "*I have myself spoken to you, rising early, and speaking, by the written word and the dictates and admonitions of conscience; (v. 14.) nay, I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets, men like yourselves, whose terrors shall not make you afraid, rising up early and sending them, (v. 15.) and yet all in vain.*" (4.) Jonadab never did that for his seed, that God had done for his people; he left them a charge, but left them no estate to bear the charge; but God had given his people a *good land*, and promised them, that, if they would be obedient, they should still dwell in it; so that they were bound both in gratitude and interest to be obedient, and yet they *would not hear*, they would not *hearken*. (5.) God did not tie up his people to so much hardship, and to such instances of mortification, as Jonadab obliged his seed to; and yet Jonadab's orders were obeyed, and God's were not.

2. Judgments are threatened, as often before, against Judah and Jerusalem, for their disobedience thus aggravated. The Rechabites shall rise up in judgment against them, and shall condemn them; for they very punctually performed the commandment of their father, and continued and persevered in their obedience to it; (v. 16.) but *this people*, this rebellious and gainsaying people, *have not hearkened unto me*; and therefore, (v. 17.) because they have not obeyed the precepts of the word, God will perform the threatenings of it; "*I will bring upon them, by the Chaldean army, all the evil pronounced against them, both in the law and in the prophets, for I have spoken to them, I have called to them; spoken in a still small voice to them that were near, and called aloud to them that were at a distance; tried all ways and means to convince and reduce them: spoken by my word, called by my providence, both for the same purpose, and yet all to no purpose; they have not heard, nor answered.*"

3. Mercy is here promised to the family of the Rechabites, for their steady and unanimous adherence to the laws of their house; though it was only for the shaming of Israel that their constancy was tried: yet, being unshaken, it was *found unto praise, and honour, and glory*. And God takes occasion from it to tell them that he had favours in reserve for them. (v. 18, 19.) and that they should have the comfort of them. It is promised, (1.) That the family should continue as long as any of the families of Israel, among whom they were strangers and sojourners. It shall *never want a man to inherit what they had*, though they had no inheritance to leave them. Note, Sometimes those that have the smallest estates have the most numerous progeny: but he that sows mouths, will be sure to send meat. (2.) That religion shall continue in the family; "*He shall not want a man to stand before me, to serve me.*" Though they are neither priests nor Levites, nor appear to have had any post in the temple-ser-

vice, yet, in a constant course of regular devotion, they *stand before God*, to minister to him. Note, [1.] The greatest blessing that can be entailed upon a family, is, to have the worship of God kept up in it from generation to generation. [2.] Temperance, self-denial, and mortification to the world, do very much befriend the exercises of piety, and help to transmit the observance of them to posterity. The more dead we are to the delights of sense, the better we are disposed for the service of God; but nothing is more fatal to the entail of religion in a family than pride and luxury.

CHAP. XXXVI.

Here is another expedient tried to work upon this heedless and untoward people, but it is tried in vain. A roll of a book is provided, containing an abstract or abridgment of all the sermons that Jeremiah had preached to them, that they might be put in mind of what they had heard, and might the better understand it, when they had it all before them at one view. Now here we have, I. The writing of this roll by Baruch, as Jeremiah dictated it, v. 1..4. II. The reading of the roll by Baruch to all the people publicly on a fast-day, (v. 5..10.) afterward by Baruch to the princes privately, (v. 11..19.) and lastly by Jehudi to the king, v. 20, 21. III. The burning of the roll by the king, with orders to prosecute Jeremiah and Baruch, v. 22..26. IV. The writing of another roll, with large additions, particularly of Jehoiakim's doom for burning the former, v. 27..32.

1. **AND** it came to pass, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2. Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. 3. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin. 4. Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book. 5. And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I am shut up; I cannot go into the house of the LORD: 6. Therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the LORD, in the ears of the people, in the LORD's house upon the fasting-day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities. 7. It may be they will present their supplication before the LORD, and will return every one from his evil way: for great is the anger and the fury that the LORD hath pronounced against this people. 8. And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the LORD in the LORD's house.

In the beginning of Ezekiel's prophecy we meet with a roll written in vision, for the discovery of the things therein contained to the prophet himself, who was to receive and digest them, Ezek. ii. 10.—

in. 1. Here in the latter end of Jeremiah's prophecy, we meet with a *roll*, written *in fact*, for the discovery of the things contained therein to the people, who were to hear and give heed to them; for the written word and other good books are of great use both to ministers and people. We have here,

1. The command which God gave to Jeremiah to write a summary of his sermons, of all the reproofs and all the warnings he had given in God's name to his people, ever since he first began to be a preacher, in the 13th year of Josiah, to *this day*, which was in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, v. 2, 3. What had been *spoken* only, must now be *written*, that it might be reviewed, and that it might spread the further, and last the longer. What had been spoken at large, with frequent repetitions of the same things, perhaps in the same words, (which has its advantage one way,) must now be contracted, and put into less compass, that the several parts of it might be better compared together, which has its advantage another way. What they had heard once, must be recapitulated, and rehearsed to them again, that what was forgotten, might be called to mind again, and what made no impression upon them at the first hearing, might take hold of them when they heard it the second time. And what was perhaps already written, and published in single sermons, must be collected into one volume, that none might be lost. Note, The writing of the scripture is by divine appointment. And observe the reason here given for the writing of this roll; (v. 3.) *It may be, the house of Judah will hear*. Not that the divine prescience was of any uncertainty concerning the event, with that there is no peradventure; God knew certainly that *they would deal very treacherously*, Isa. xlviii. 8. But the divine wisdom directed to this as a proper means for attaining the desired end; if it failed, they would be the more inexcusable. And though God foresaw that they would not hear, he did not tell the prophet so, but prescribed this method to him as a probable one, to be used, in the hopes that they would *hear*, that is, heed and regard what they heard, take notice of it, and mix faith with it: for otherwise our hearing of the word, though an angel from heaven were to read or preach it to us, would stand us in no stead. Now observe here, (1.) What, it is hoped, they will thus hear; *All that evil which I purpose to do unto them*. Note, The serious consideration of the certain fatal consequence of sin, will be of great use to us to bring us to God. (2.) What, it is hoped, will be produced thereby; *They will hear, that they may return every man from his evil way*. Note, The conversion of sinners from their evil courses, is that which ministers should aim at in preaching; and people hear the word in vain, if that point be not gained with them. To what purpose do we hear of the evil God will bring upon us for sin, if we continue, notwithstanding, to do evil against him? (3.) Of what vast advantage their consideration and conversion will be to them; *that I may forgive their iniquity*. This plainly implies the honour of God's justice, with which it is not consistent that he should forgive the sin, unless the sinner repent of it, and turn from it; but it plainly expresses the honour of his mercy, that he is very ready to forgive sin, and only waits till the sinner be qualified to receive forgiveness, and therefore uses various means to bring us to repentance, *that he may forgive*.

2. The instructions which Jeremiah gave to Baruch his scribe, pursuant to the command he had received from God, and the writing of the roll accordingly, v. 4. God bid Jeremiah write, but, it should seem, he had not the *pen of a ready writer*, he could not write fast, or fair, so as Baruch could, and therefore he made use of him as his amanuen-

sis. St. Paul wrote but few of his epistles with his own hand, Gal. vi. 11. Rom. xvi. 22. God dispenses his gifts variously; some have a good faculty of speaking, others at writing, and neither can say to the other, *We have no need of you*, 1 Cor. xii. 21. The Spirit of God dictated to Jeremiah, and he to Baruch, who had been employed by Jeremiah as trustee for him in his purchase of the field, (ch. xxxii. 12.) and now was advanced to be his scribe and substitute in his prophetic office; and if we may credit the Apocryphal book that bears his name, he was afterward himself a prophet to the captives in Babylon. Those that begin low are likely to rise high, and it is good for those that are designed for prophets to have their education under prophets, and to be serviceable to them. Baruch wrote what Jeremiah dictated in a *roll of a book*, on pieces of parchment, or vellum, which were joined together, the top of one to the bottom of the other, so making one long scroll, which was rolled perhaps upon a staff.

3. The orders which Jeremiah gave to Baruch, to read what he had written to the people. Jeremiah, it seems, was *shut up*, and *could not go to the house of the Lord* himself; (v. 5.) though he was not a close prisoner, for then there had been no occasion to send officers to seize him, (v. 26.) yet he was forbidden by the king to appear in the temple, was shut out thence, where he might be serving God, and doing good, which was as bad to him as if he had been shut up in a dungeon. Jehoiakim was ripening apace for ruin, when he thus silenced God's faithful messengers. But when Jeremiah could not go to the temple himself, he sent one that was deputed by him, to read to the people what he would himself have said. Thus St. Paul wrote epistles to the churches which he could not visit in person. Nay, it was what he himself had often said to them. Note, The writing and repeating of the sermons that have been preached, may contribute very much toward the answering of the great ends of preaching. What we have heard and known, it is good for us to hear again, that we may know it better. To preach and write the same thing is safe and profitable, and many times very necessary, (Phil. iii. 1.) and we must be glad to hear a good word from God, though we have it, as here, at second-hand. Both ministers and people must do what they can, when they cannot do what they would. Observe, When God ordered the reading of the roll, he said, *It may be, they will hear, and return from their evil ways*, v. 3. When Jeremiah orders it, he says, *It may be, they will pray*, (they will *present their supplications before the Lord*), and will *return from their evil way*. Note, Prayer to God for grace to turn us, is necessary in order to our turning; and those that are convinced by the word of God of the necessity of returning to him, will present their supplications to him for that grace. And the consideration of this, that *great is the anger which God has pronounced against us for sin*, should quicken both our prayers and our endeavours. Now according to these orders, Baruch did read *out of the book the words of the Lord*, whenever there was a *holy convocation*, v. 8.

9. And it came to pass, in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, in the ninth month, *that they proclaimed a fast before the Lord* to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem. 10. Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the Lord, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of

Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORD's house, in the ears of all the people. 11. When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard out of the book all the words of the LORD, 12. Then he went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber, and, lo, all the princes sat there, *even* Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes. 13. Then Michaiah declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people. 14. Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, unto Baruch, saying, Take in thy hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch the son of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and came unto them. 15. And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read *it* in their ears. 16. Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words. 17. And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth? 18. Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote *them* with ink in the book. 19. Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go hide thee, thou and Jeremiah, and let no man know where ye be.

It should seem that Baruch had been frequently reading out of the book, to all companies that would give him the hearing, before the most solemn reading of it altogether, which is here spoken of; for the directions were given about it in the *4th year of Jehoiakim*, whereas this was done in the *5th year*, v. 9. But some think that the writing of the book fair over, took up so much time, that it was another year ere it was perfected; and yet perhaps it might not be past a month or two, he might begin in the latter end of the 4th year, and finish it in the beginning of the 5th, for the *9th month* refers to the computation of the year in general, not to the year of that reign. Now observe here,

1. The government appointed a public fast to be religiously observed, (v. 9.) on account either of the distress they were brought into by the army of the Chaldeans, or of the want of rain; (*ch. xiv. 1.*) *They proclaimed a fast to the people*; whether the king and princes, or the priests, ordered this fast, is not certain; but it was plain that God by his providence called them aloud to it. Note, Great shows of piety and devotion may be found even among those who, though they keep up these *forms of godliness*, are strangers and enemies to the *power* of it. But what will such hypocritical services avail? Fasting, without reforming, and turning away from sin, will never turn away the judgments of God, Jonah iii. 10. Not-

withstanding this fast, God proceeded in his controversy with this people.

2. Baruch repeated Jeremiah's sermons publicly in the house of the Lord, on the fast-day. He stood in a chamber that belonged to Gemariah, and out of a window, or balcony, read to the people that were in the court, v. 10. Note, When we are speaking to God, we must be willing to hear from him; and therefore on days of fasting and prayer, it is requisite that the word be read and preached. *Hearken unto me, that God may hearken unto you*, Judg. ix. 7. For our help in suing out mercy and grace, it is proper that we should be told of sin and duty.

3. An account was brought of this to the princes that attended the court, and were now together in the secretary's office, here called the *scribe's chamber*, v. 12. It should seem, though the princes had called the people to meet in the house of God, to fast, and pray, and hear the word, they did not think fit to attend there themselves, which was a sign that it was not from a principle of true devotion, but merely for fashion-sake, that they proclaimed this fast. We are willing to hope that it was not with a bad design, to bring Jeremiah into trouble for his preaching, but with a good design, to bring the princes into trouble for their sins, that Michaiah informed the princes of what Baruch had read; for his father Gemariah so far countenanced Baruch, as to lend him his chamber to read out of. Michaiah finds the princes sitting in the *scribe's chamber*, and tells them, they had better have been where he had been, hearing a good sermon in the temple, which he gives them the heads of. Note, When we have heard some good word that has affected and edified us, we should be ready to communicate it to others, that did not hear it, for their edification. *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*.

4. Baruch is sent for, and is ordered to sit down among them, and read it all over again to them, (v. 14, 15.) which he readily did, not complaining that he was weary with his public work, and therefore desiring to be excused, nor upbraiding the princes with their being absent from the temple, where they might have heard it when he read it there. Note, God's ministers must *become all things to all men*, if by any means they may gain some; must comply with them in circumstances, that they may secure the substance. St. Paul preached privately to them of reputation, Gal. ii. 2.

5. The princes were for the present much affected with the word that was read to them, v. 16. Observe, *They heard all the words*, they did not interrupt him, but very patiently attended to the reading of the whole book; for otherwise how could they make a competent judgment of it? And *when they had heard all, they were afraid*, were all afraid, *one as well as another*; like Felix, who trembled at Paul's reasonings. The reproofs were just, the threatenings terrible, and the predictions now in a fair way to be fulfilled; so that, laying all together, they were in a great consternation. We are not told what impressions this reading of the roll made upon the people, (v. 10.) but the princes were put into a fright by it, and (as some read it) *looked one upon another*, not knowing what to say. They were all convinced that it was worthy to be regarded, but none of them had courage to second it, only they agreed to *tell the king of all these words*; and if he think fit to give credit to them, *they will*, otherwise not, no, though it were to prevent the ruin of the nation. And yet at the same time they knew the king's mind so far, that they advised Baruch and Jeremiah to hide themselves, (v. 10.) and to shift as they could for their own safety, expecting no other than that the king, instead of being

convinced, would be exasperated. Note, It is common for sinners, under convictions, to endeavour to shake them off, by shifting off the prosecution of them to other persons, as these princes here, or to another *more convenient season*, as Felix.

6. They asked Baruch a trifling question, *How he wrote all those words?* v. 17. as if they suspected there was something extraordinary in it; but Baruch gives them a plain answer, that there was nothing but what was common in the manner of the writing—Jeremiah dictated, and he wrote, v. 18. But thus it is common for those who would avoid the convictions of the word of God, to start needless questions about the way and manner of the inspiration of it.

20. And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king. 21. So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll; and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber: and Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. 22. Now the king sat in the winter-house, in the ninth month: and *there was a fire* on the hearth burning before him. 23. And it came to pass, *that* when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the pen-knife, and cast it into the fire that *was* on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that *was* on the hearth. 24. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, *neither* the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words. 25. Nevertheless, Elnathan, and Delaiah, and Gemariah, had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll; but he would not hear them. 26. But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe, and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them. 27. Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, (after that the king had burnt the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah,) saying, 28. Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burnt. 29. And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the LORD, Thou hast burnt this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? 30. Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah, He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. 31. And I will punish him, and

his seed, and his servants, for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them: but they hearkened not. 32. Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein, from the mouth of Jeremiah, all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burnt in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.

We have traced the roll to the people, and to the princes, and here we are to follow it to the king; and we find,

1. That, upon notice given him concerning it, he sent for it, and ordered it to be read to him, v. 20, 21. He did not desire that Baruch would come and read it himself, who could read it more intelligently, and with more authority and affection, than any one else; nor did he order one of his princes to do it; (though it had been no disparagement to the greatest of them;) much less would he vouchsafe to read it himself; but Jehudi, one of his pages now in waiting, who was sent to fetch it, is bid to read it, who, perhaps, scarcely knew how to make sense of it. But those who thus despise the word of God, will soon make it to appear, as this king here did, that they hate it too, and have not only low but ill thoughts of it.

2. That he had not patience to hear it read through as the princes had, but that, when he had heard *three or four leaves* read, in a rage, he *cut it with his penknife*, and threw it piece by piece *into the fire*, that he might be sure to see it *all consumed*, v. 22, 23. This was a piece of as daring impiety as a man could lightly be guilty of, and a most impudent affront to the God of heaven, whose message this was. (1.) Thus he showed his impatience of reproof; being resolved to persist in sin, he would by no means bear to be told of his faults. (2.) Thus he showed his indignation at Baruch and Jeremiah; he would have cut them in pieces, and burned them, if he had had them in his reach, when he was in this passion. (3.) Thus he expressed an obstinate resolution, never to comply with the designs and intentions of the warnings given him; he will do what he will, whatever God by his prophets says to the contrary. (4.) Thus he foolishly hoped to defeat the threatenings denounced against him; as if God knew not how to execute the sentence when the roll was gone in which it was written. (5.) Thus he thought he had effectually provided that the things contained in this roll should spread no further, which was the care of the chief-priest concerning the gospel, Acts iv. 17. They had told him how this roll had been read to the people and to the princes; "But," (says he) "I will take a course that shall prevent its being read any more." See what an enmity there is against God in the carnal mind, and wonder at the patience of God, that he bears with such indignities done to him!

3. That neither the king himself, nor any of his princes, were at all affected with the word; *They were not afraid*, (v. 24.) no, not those princes that *trembled at the word*, when they heard it the first time, v. 16. So soon, so easily, do good impressions wear off! They showed some concern till they saw how light the king made of it, and then they shook off all that concern. *They rent not their garments*, as Josiah did; this Jehoiakim's own father did, when he had the *book of the law* read to him, though it was not so particular as the contents of this roll

were, nor so immediately adapted to the present posture of affairs.

4. That there were three of the princes who had so much sense and grace left as to interpose for the preventing of the burning of the roll, but in vain, v. 25. If they had from the first showed themselves, as they ought to have done, affected with the word, perhaps they might have brought the king to a better mind, and have persuaded him to bear it patiently; but frequently they that will not do the good they should, put it out of their own power to do the good they would.

5. That Jehoiakim, when he had thus in effect burnt God's warrant by which he was arrested, as it were in a way of revenge, now that he thought he had got the better, signed a warrant for the apprehending of Jeremiah and Baruch, God's ministers; (v. 26.) *But the Lord hid them.* The princes bid them abscond, (v. 19.) but it was neither the princes' care for them, nor theirs for themselves, that secured them, it was under the divine protection that they were safe. Note, God will find out a shelter for his people, though their persecutors be ever so industrious to get them into their power, till their hour be come; nay, and then he will himself be their *Hiding-place*.

6. That Jeremiah had orders and instructions to write in another roll the same words that were written in the roll which Jehoiakim had burnt, v. 27, 28. Note, Though the attempts of hell against the word of God are very daring, yet not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground, nor shall the unbelief of man make the word of God of no effect. Enemies may prevail to burn many a Bible, but they cannot abolish the word of God, can neither extirpate it, nor defeat the accomplishment of it. Though the tables of the law were broken, they were renewed again; and so out of the ashes of the roll that was burnt, arose another Phoenix. *The word of the Lord endures for ever.*

7. That the king of Judah, though a king, was severely reckoned with by the King of kings for this indignity done to the written word. God noticed what it was in the roll that Jehoiakim took so much offence at. Jehoiakim was angry, because it was *written therein, saying, Surely the king of Babylon shall come and destroy this land,* v. 29. And did not the king of Babylon come two years before this, and go far toward the *destroying of this land*? He did so, (2 Chron. xxxvi. 6, 7.) in his third year, Dan. i. 1. So that God and his prophets were *therefore become his enemies, because they told him the truth*, told him of the desolation that was coming, but at the same time putting him into a fair way to prevent it. But if this be the thing he takes so much amiss, let him know, (1.) That the wrath of God shall come upon him and his family, in the first place, by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar; he shall be cut off, and in a few weeks his son shall be dethroned, and exchange his royal robes for prison-garments, so that *he shall have none to sit upon the throne of David*; the glory of that illustrious house shall be eclipsed, and die, in him; *his dead body shall lie unburied, or, which comes all to one, he shall be buried with the burial of an ass*, that is, thrown into the next ditch; it shall lie exposed to all weathers, *heat and frost*, which will occasion its putrifying, and becoming loathsome, the sooner. "Not that his body" (says Mr. Gataker) "could be sensible of such usage, or himself, being deceased, of aught that should befall his body; but that the king's body in such a condition should be a hideous spectacle, and a horrid monument of God's heavy wrath and indignation against him, unto all that should behold it." Even *his seed and his servants* shall fare the worse for their relation to him, (v. 31.) for they shall be punished, not for his ini-

quity, but so much the sooner *for their own.* (2.) That all the evil pronounced against Judah and Jerusalem in that roll, shall be brought upon them. Though the copy be burnt, the original remains in the divine counsel, which shall again be copied out after another manner in bloody characters. Note, There is no escaping of God's judgments by struggling with them; *who ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered?*

Lastly, That, when the roll was written anew, *there were added to the former many like words,* (v. 32.) many more threatenings of wrath and vengeance; for since they will yet *walk contrary to God*, he will *heat the furnace seven times hotter.* Note, as God is in one mind, and none can turn him, so he has still more arrows in his quiver; and those who contend with God's woes, do but prepare for themselves heavier of the same kind.

CHAP. XXXVII.

This chapter brings us very near the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, for the story of it lies in the latter end of Zedekiah's reign; we have in it, I. A general idea of the bad character of that reign, v. 1, 2. II. The message which Zedekiah, notwithstanding, sent to Jeremiah to desire his prayers, v. 3. III. The flattering hopes which the people had conceived, that the Chaldeans would quit the siege of Jerusalem, v. 5. IV. The assurance God gave them by Jeremiah, (who was now at liberty, v. 4.) that the Chaldean army should renew the siege, and take the city, v. 6. 10. V. The imprisonment of Jeremiah, under pretence that he was a deserter, v. 11. 15. VI. The kindness which Zedekiah showed him when he was a prisoner, v. 16. 21.

1. **A**ND king Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah. 2. But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the LORD, which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah. 3. And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the LORD our God for us. 4. Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people; for they had not put him into prison. 5. Then Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem. 6. Then came the word of the LORD unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 7. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to inquire of me; Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. 8. And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire. 9. Thus saith the LORD, Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart. 10. For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained *but* wounded men among them, *yet* should they rise

up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

Here is,

1. Jeremiah's preaching slighted, *v.* 1, 2. Zedekiah succeeded Coniah, or Jechoniah, and though he saw in his predecessor the fatal consequences of contemning the word of God, yet he did not take warning, nor give any more regard to it than others had done before him; *Neither he, nor his courtiers, nor the people of the land, hearkened unto the words of the Lord*, though they already began to be fulfilled. Note, Those have hearts wretchedly hard indeed, that see God's judgments on others, and feel them on themselves, and yet will not be humbled, and brought to heed what he says. These had proof sufficient that it was the Lord who spake by Jeremiah the prophet, and yet they would not hearken to him.

2. Jeremiah's prayers desired. Zedekiah sent messengers to him, saying, *Pray now unto the Lord our God for us.* He did so before; (*ch.* xxi. 1, 2.) and one of the messengers, Zephaniah, is the same there and here. Zedekiah is to be commended for this, and it shows that he had some good in him, some sense of his need of God's favour, and of his own unworthiness to ask it for himself, and some value for good people, and good ministers, who had an interest in Heaven. Note, When we are in distress, we ought to desire the prayers of our ministers and Christian friends, for thereby we put an honour upon prayer, and an esteem upon our brethren. Kings themselves should look upon their praying people as the strength of the nation, *Zech.* xii. 5, 10. And yet this does but help to condemn Zedekiah out of his own mouth. If indeed he looked upon Jeremiah as a prophet, whose prayers might avail much both for him and his people, why did he not then believe him, and *hearken to the words of the Lord*, which he spake by him? He desired his good prayers, but would not take his good counsel, nor be ruled by him, though he spake in God's name, and it appears by this that Zedekiah knew he did. Note, It is common for those to desire to be prayed for, who yet will not be advised; but herein they put a cheat upon themselves; for how can we expect that God should hear others speaking to him for us, if we will not hear them speaking to us from him, and for him? Many who despise prayer when they are in prosperity, will be glad of it when they are in adversity; *Now give us of your oil.* When Zedekiah sent to the prophet to pray for him, he had better have sent for the prophet to pray with him; but he thought that below him: and how can they expect the comforts of religion, who will not stoop to the services of it?

3. Jerusalem flattered by the retreat of the Chaldean army from it. Jeremiah was now at liberty; (*v.* 4.) he *went in and out among the people*, might freely speak to them, and be spoken to by them. Jerusalem also, for the present, was at liberty, *v.* 5. Zedekiah, though a tributary to the king of Babylon, had entered into a private league with Pharaoh king of Egypt, (*Ezek.* xvii. 15.) pursuant to which, when the king of Babylon came to chastise him for his treachery, the king of Egypt, though he came no more in person, after that great defeat which Nebuchadnezzar gave him in the reign of Jehoiakim, (*2 Kings* xxiv. 7.) yet sent some forces to relieve Jerusalem when it was besieged; upon notice of the approach of which, the Chaldeans raised the siege, probably not for fear of them, but in policy, to fight them at a distance, before any of the Jewish forces could join them. From this they encouraged themselves to hope that Jerusalem was delivered for good and all out of the hands of its enemies, and that the storm was quite blown over. Note, Sinners

are commonly hardened in their security by the intermissions of judgments, and the slow proceedings of them; and those who will not be awakened by the word of God, may justly be lulled asleep by the providence of God.

4. Jerusalem threatened with the return of the Chaldean army, and with ruin by it. Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah to desire him to pray for them, that the Chaldean army might not return; but Jeremiah sends them word back that the decree was gone forth, and that it was but a folly for them to expect peace, for God had begun a controversy with them, which he would make an end of; *Thus saith the Lord, deceive not yourselves, v.* 9. Note, Satan himself, though he is the great deceiver, could not deceive us, if we did not deceive ourselves; and thus sinners are their own destroyers by being their own deceivers; of which this is an aggravation, that they are so frequently warned of it, and cautioned not to deceive themselves; and they have the word of God, the great design of which is to undeceive them. Jeremiah uses no dark metaphors, but tells them plainly,

(1.) That the Egyptians shall retreat, and either give back, or be forced back, *into their own land*, (*Ezek.* xvii. 17.) which was said of old, (*Isa.* xxx 7.) and is here said again, *v.* 7. That the Egyptians shall help in vain; they shall not dare to face the Chaldean army, but shall retire with precipitation. Note, If God help us not, no creature can. As no power can prevail against God, so none can avail without God, nor countervail his departures from us.

(2.) That the Chaldeans shall return, and shall renew the siege, and prosecute it with more vigour than ever. *They shall not depart for good and all v.* 9. *They shall come again; (v.* 8.) *they shall fight against the city.* Note, God has the sovereign command of all the hosts of men, even of those that know him not, that own him not, and they are all made to serve his purposes. He directs their marches, their counter-marches, their retreats, their returns, as it pleases him; and furious armies, like *stormy winds*, in all their motions are *fulfilling his word*.

(3.) That Jerusalem shall certainly be delivered into the hand of the Chaldeans! *They shall take it, and burn it with fire, v.* 8. The sentence passed upon it shall be executed, and they shall be the executioners. "O but" (say they) "the Chaldeans are withdrawn, they have quitted the enterprize as impracticable;" "And though they have," says the prophet, "nay, *though you had smitten their army*, so that many were slain, and all the rest wounded, yet those *wounded men should rise up, and burn this city,*" *v.* 10. This is designed to denote that the doom passed upon Jerusalem is irrevocable, and its destruction inevitable; it must be laid in ruins, and these Chaldeans are the men that must do it, and it is now in vain to think of evading the stroke, or contending with it. Note, Whatever instruments God has determined to make use of in any service for him, whether of mercy or judgment, they shall accomplish that for which they are designed, whatever incapacity or disability they may lie under, or be reduced to. Those by whom God has resolved to save or to destroy, saviours they shall be, and destroyers they shall be, yea, though they were all wounded; for as when God has work to do, he will not want instruments to do it with, though they may seem far to seek; so when he has chosen his instruments, they shall do the work, though they may seem very unlikely to accomplish it.

11. And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, 12

Then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people.

13. And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward *was* there, whose name *was* Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fastest away to the Chaldeans. 14. Then said Jeremiah, *It is false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans.* But he hearkened not to him: so Irijah took Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes. 15. Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe; for they had made that the prison. 16. When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins, and Jeremiah had remained there many days; 17. Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took him out; and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there *any* word from the LORD? And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. 18. Moreover, Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, What have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison? 19. Where *are* now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land? 20. Therefore hear now, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there. 21. Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah into the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city were spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

We have here a further account concerning Jeremiah, who relates more passages concerning himself than any other of the prophets; for the histories of the lives and sufferings of God's ministers have been very serviceable to the church, as well as their preaching and writing.

I. We are here told that Jeremiah, when he had an opportunity for it, attempted to retire out of Jerusalem into the country; (v. 11, 12.) *When the Chaldeans had broken up from Jerusalem, because of Pharaoh's army*, upon the notice of their advancing towards them, Jeremiah determined to go into the country, and (as the margin reads it) *to slip away from Jerusalem in the midst of the people*, who, in that interval of the siege, went out into the country to look after their affairs there; he endeavoured to steal away in the crowd, for, though he was a man of great eminence, he could well reconcile himself to obscurity; though he was one of a thousand, he was content to be lost in the multitude, and buried alive in a corner, in a cottage.

Whether he designed for Anathoth or no, does not appear; his concerns might call him thither, but his neighbours there were such as, unless they were mended since, (*ch. xi. 21.*) might discourage him from coming among them; or he might intend to hide himself somewhere where he was not known, and fulfil his own wish, (*ch. xi. 2.*) *Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place!* Jeremiah found he could do no good in Jerusalem, he laboured in vain among them, and therefore determined to leave them. Note, There are times when it is the wisdom of good men to retire into privacy, to enter into the chamber, and shut the doors about them, Isa. xxvi. 20.

II. That in this attempt he was seized as a deserter, and committed to prison; (v. 13.—15.) *He was in the gate of Benjamin*, so far he had gained his point, when a captain of the ward, who, probably, had the charge of that gate, discovered him, and took him into custody. He was the grandson of Hananiah, who, the Jews say, was Hananiah the false prophet, who contested with Jeremiah, (*ch. xxviii. 16.*) and that this young captain had a spite to Jeremiah upon that account. He could not arrest him without some pretence, and that which he charges upon him is, *Thou fastest away to the Chaldeans*; an unlikely story, for the Chaldeans were now gone off, Jeremiah could not reach them; or if he could, who would go over to a baffled army? Jeremiah, therefore, with good reason, and with both the confidence and the mildness of an innocent man, denies the charge, "*It is false, I fall not away to the Chaldeans*, I am going upon my own lawful occasions." Note, It is no new thing for the church's best friends to be represented as in the interest of her worst enemies; thus have the blackest characters been put upon the fairest, purest minds, and, in such a malicious world as this is, innocence, nay, excellency itself, is no fence against the basest calumny. When at any time we are thus falsely accused, we may do as Jeremiah did, boldly deny the charge, and then commit our cause to him that judges righteously. Jeremiah's protestation of his integrity, though he be a prophet, a man of God, a man of honour and sincerity, though he is a priest, and is ready to say it *in verbo sacerdotis*—on the word of a priest, is not regarded; but he is brought before the privy-council, who, without examining him and the proofs against him, but upon the base, malicious insinuation of the captain, fell into a passion with him, they *were wroth*; and what justice could be expected from men, who, being in anger, would hear no reason? They beat him, without any regard had to his coat and character, and then put him in prison, in the worst prison they had, that in the house of Jonathan the scribe; either it had been his house, and he had quitted it for the inconveniences of it, but it was thought good enough for a prison; or it was now his house, and perhaps he was a rigid severe man, that made it a house of cruel bondage to his prisoners. Into this prison Jeremiah was thrust, *into the dungeon*, which was dark and cold, damp and dirty, the most uncomfortable, unhealthful place in it; in the cells or cabins, there he must lodge, among which there is no choice, for they are all alike miserable lodging places; *there Jeremiah remained many days*, and, for aught appears, nobody came near him, or inquired after him. See what a world this is! The wicked princes, who are in rebellion against God, lie at ease, lie in state, in their palaces, while godly Jeremiah, who is in the service of God, lies in pain, in a loathsome dungeon. It is well that there is a world to come!

III. That Zedekiah at length sent for him, and showed him some favour; but, probably, not till the Chaldean army was returned, and had laid fresh siege to the city; when their vain hopes, with which they fed themselves, (and in confidence of which

hey had re-enslaved their servants, *ch. xxxiv. 11.*) were all vanished, then they were in a greater confusion and consternation than ever; "O then" (says Zedekiah) "send in all haste for the prophet; let me have some talk with him." When the Chaldeans were withdrawn, he only sent to the prophet to pray for him; but now that they had again invested the city, he sent for him to consult him. Thus gracious will men be when pangs come upon them!

1. The king sent for him to give him private audience as an ambassador from God. He asked him *secretly in his house*, being ashamed to be seen in his company, "*Is there any word from the Lord?*" *v. 17.* Any word of comfort? Canst thou give us any hopes that the Chaldeans shall again retire?" Note, Those that will not hearken to God's admonitions when they are in prosperity, would be glad of his consolations when they are in adversity, and expect that his ministers should then speak words of peace to them; but how can they expect it? What have they to do with peace? Jeremiah's life and comfort are in Zedekiah's hand, and he has now a petition to present to him for his favour, and yet, having this opportunity, he tells him plainly, that *there is a word from the Lord*, but no word of comfort for him or his people; *Thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.* If Jeremiah had consulted with flesh and blood, he would have given him a plausible answer, and though he would not have told him a lie, yet he might have chosen whether he would tell him the worst at this time; what occasion was there for it, when he had so often told it him before? But Jeremiah was one that had *obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful*, and would not, to obtain mercy of man, be unfaithful either to God or to his prince; he therefore tells him the truth, the whole truth. And, since there was no remedy, it would be a kindness to the king to know his doom, that being no surprise to him, it might be the less a terror, and he might provide to make the best of bad. Jeremiah takes this occasion to upbraid him and his people with the credit they gave to the false prophets, who told them that *the king of Babylon should not come at all*, or when he was withdrawn, *should not come again against them*, *v. 19.* "*Where are now your prophets*, who told you that you should have peace?" Note, Those who deceive themselves with groundless hopes of mercy, will justly be upbraided with it when the event has undeceived them.

2. He improved this opportunity for the presenting of a private petition, as a poor prisoner, *v. 18, 20.* It was not in Jeremiah's power to reverse the sentence God had passed upon Zedekiah, but it was in Zedekiah's power to reverse the sentence which the princes had given against him; and therefore, since he thought him fit to be used as a prophet, he would not think him fit to be abused as the worst of malefactors. He humbly expostulates with the king; "*What have I offended against thee, or thy servants, or this people*, what law have I broken, what injury have I done to the common welfare, *that ye have put me in prison?*" And many a one that has been very hardly dealt with, has been able to make the same appeal, and to make it good. He likewise earnestly begs, and very pathetically, (*v. 20.*) *Cause me not to return to yonder noisome gaol, to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there.* This was the language of innocent nature, sensible of its own grievances, and solicitous for its own preservation. Though he was not at all unwilling to die God's martyr, yet, having so fair an opportunity to get relief, he would not let it slip, lest he should die his own murderer. When Jeremiah delivered God's message, he spake, as one having authority, with the greatest boldness; but when he presented his own request, he spake as one under authority, with

the greatest submissiveness; *Hear me, I pray thee, O my lord the king, let my supplications, I pray thee, be accepted before thee.* Here is not a word of complaint of the princes that unjustly committed him, no offer to bring an action of false imprisonment against them, but all in a way of modest supplication to the king, to teach us that even when we act with the courage that becomes the faithful servants of God, yet we must conduct ourselves with the humility and modesty that become dutiful subjects to the government God hath set over us. A lion in God's cause, must be a lamb in his own. And we find that God gave Jeremiah favour in the eyes of the king. (1.) He gave him his request, took care that he should not die in the dungeon, but ordered that he should have the liberty of the *court of the prison*, where he might have a pleasant walk, and breathe a free air. (2.) He gave him more than his request, took care that he should not die for want, as many did that had their liberty, by reason of the straitness of the siege; he ordered him his *daily bread out of the public stock* (for the prison was within the verge of the court) *till all the bread was spent.* Zedekiah ought to have released him, nay, to have preferred him, to have made him a privy-counsellor, as Joseph was taken from prison to be the second man in the kingdom; but he had not courage to do that,—it was well he did as he did, and it is an instance of the care God takes of his suffering servants that are faithful to him. He can make even their confinement turn to their advantage, and the court of their prison to become as green pastures to them, and raise up such friends to provide for them, that *in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.* *At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh.*

CHAP. XXXVIII.

In this chapter, just as in the former, we have Jeremiah greatly debased under the frowns of the princes, and yet greatly honoured by the favour of the king; they used him as a criminal, he used him as a privy-counsellor. Here, I. Jeremiah for his faithfulness is put into the dungeon by the princes, *v. 1. 6.* II. At the intercession of Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, by special order from the king, he is taken up out of the dungeon, and confined only to the court of the prison, *v. 7. 13.* III. He has a private conference with the king upon the present conjuncture of affairs, *v. 14. 23.* IV. Care is taken to keep that conference private, *v. 24. 28.*

1. **T**HEN Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying, 2. Thus saith the LORD, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live. 3. Thus saith the LORD, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it. 4. Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death; for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. 5. Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand: for the

king is not *he that* can do any thing against you. 6. Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that *was* in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon *there was* no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire. 7. Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs, which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon, (the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin,) 8. Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying, 9. My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is; for *there is* no more bread in the city. 10. Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die. 11. So Ebed-melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah. 2. And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now *these* old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine arm-holes, under the cords. And Jeremiah did so. 13. So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

Here, 1. Jeremiah persists in his plain preaching; what he had many a time said, he still says, (v. 3.) *This city shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon*; though it hold out long, it will be taken at last; nor would he have so often repeated this unwelcome message, but that he could put them in a certain way, though not to save the city, yet to save themselves; so that every man might have his own life given him for a prey, if he would be advised. v. 2. Let him not stay in the city, in hopes to defend that, for it will be to no purpose, but let him go forth to the Chaldeans, and throw himself upon their mercy, before things come to extremity, and then he *shall live*; they will not put him to the sword, out give him quarter, *Satis est prostrasse leoni.*—It suffices the lion to lay his antagonist prostrate, and he shall escape the famine and pestilence, which will be the death of multitudes within the city. Note, Those do better for themselves, who patiently submit to the rebukes of Providence, than those who contend with them. And if we cannot have our liberty, we must reckon it a mercy to have our lives, and not foolishly throw them away upon a point of honour; they may be reserved for better times.

2. The princes persist in their malice against Jeremiah. He was faithful to his country, and his trust as a prophet, though he had suffered many a time for his faithfulness; and though at this time he ate the king's bread, yet that did not stop his mouth. But his persecutors were still bitter against him, and complained that he abused the liberty he had

of walking in the court of the prison, for though he could not go to the temple to preach, yet he vented the same things in private conversation to those that came to visit him; and therefore (v. 4.) they represented him to the king as a dangerous man, disaffected to his country, and to the government he lived under; *He seeks not the welfare of this people, but the hurt*: an unjust insinuation, for no man had laid out himself more for the good of Jerusalem than he had done. They represent his preaching as having a bad tendency; the design of it was plainly to bring men to repent, and turn to God, which would have been as much as any thing a strengthening to the hands both of the soldiery and of the burghers, and yet they represented it as *weakening their hands*, and discouraging them; if he did this, it was their own fault. Note, It is common for wicked people to look upon God's faithful ministers as their enemies, only because they show them what enemies they are to themselves while they continue impenitent.

3. Jeremiah, hereupon, by the king's permission, is put into a dungeon, with a view to his destruction there. Zedekiah, though he felt a conviction that Jeremiah was a prophet, sent of God, had not courage to own it, but yielded to the violence of his persecutors, v. 5. *He is in your hand*; and a worse sentence he could not have passed upon him. We found in Jehoiakim's reign, that the princes were better affected to the prophet than the king was, (ch. xxxvi. 25.) but now they were more violent against him, a sign that they were ripening apace for ruin. Had it been in a cause that concerned his own honour or profit, he would have let them know that the king is he who can do what he pleases, whether they will or no; but in the cause of God and his prophet, which he was very cool in, he basely sneaks, and truckles to them, *The king is not he that can do any thing against you*. Note, Those will have a great deal to answer for, who, though they have a secret kindness for good people, dare not own it in a time of need, nor will do what they might do, to prevent mischief designed them. The princes having this general warrant from the king, immediately put poor Jeremiah into the dungeon of Malchiah, that was in the court of the prison, (v. 6.) a deep dungeon, for they *let* him down into it *with cords*; and a dirty one, for *there was no water in it, but mire*; and he *sunk in the mire, up to the neck*, says Josephus. They that put him here, doubtless designed that he should die here, die for hunger, die for cold, and so die miserably, die obscurely, fearing, if they should put him to death openly, the people might be affected with what he would say, and be incensed against them. Many of God's faithful witnesses have thus been privately made away, and starved to death in prisons, whose blood will be brought to account in the day of discovery. We are not here told what Jeremiah did in this distress, but he tells us himself, (Lam. iii. 35, 37.) *I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon, and thou drewest near, saying, Fear not*.

4. Application is made to the king by an honest courtier, Ebed-melech, one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber, in behalf of the poor sufferer. Though the princes carried on the matter as privately as they could, yet it came to the ear of this good man, who, probably, sought opportunities to do good. It may be, he came to the knowledge of it by hearing Jeremiah's moans out of the dungeon, for it was in the king's house, v. 7. Ebed-melech was an Ethiopian, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, and yet had in him more humanity, and more divinity too, than native Israelites had. Christ found more faith among Gentiles than among Jews. Ebed-melech lived in a wicked court, and a very corrupt, degenerate age, and yet had a great sense both of

equity and piety. God has his remnant in all places, among all sorts. There were *saints* even in *Cesur's household*. The king was now *sitting in the gates of Benjamin*, to try causes, and receive appeals and petitions, or perhaps holding a council of war there: thither Ebed-melech went immediately to him, for the case would not admit delay; the prophet might have perished, if he had trifled, or put it off till he had an opportunity of speaking to the king in private. No time must be lost when life is in danger, especially so valuable a life. He boldly asserts that Jeremiah had a great deal of wrong done him, and is not afraid to tell the king so, though they were princes that did it, though they were now present in court, and though they had the king's warrant for what they did. Whither should oppressed innocency flee for protection but to the throne, especially when great men are its oppressors? Ebed-melech appears truly brave in this matter; he does not mince the matter; though he had a place at court, which he would be in danger of losing for his plain dealing, yet he tells the king faithfully, let him take it as he will: *These men have done ill in all that they have done to Jeremiah*. They dealt unjustly with him, for he had not deserved any punishment at all; and they had dealt barbarously with him, so as they used not to deal with the vilest malefactors. And they needed not to have put him to this miserable death, for if they had let him alone where he was, he was *likely to die for hunger in the place where he was*, in the court of the prison to which he was confined, *for there was no more bread in the city*; the stores out of which he was to have his allowance, (*ch. xxxvii. 21.*) were in a manner spent. See how God can raise up friends for his people in distress, where they little thought of them; and spirit men for his service even beyond expectation!

5. Orders are immediately given for his release, and Ebed-melech takes care to see them executed. The king who, but now, durst do nothing against the princes, had his heart wonderfully changed on a sudden, and will now have Jeremiah released, in defiance of the princes, for therefore he orders no less than 30 men, and those of the life-guard, to be employed in fetching him out of the dungeon, lest the princes should raise a party to oppose it, *v. 10*. Let this encourage us to appear boldly for God—we may succeed better than we could have thought, *for the hearts of kings are in the hand of God*. Ebed-melech gained his point, and soon brought Jeremiah the good news; and it is observable how particularly the manner of his drawing him out of the dungeon is related: (*for God is not unrighteous to forget any work or labour of love which is showed to his people or ministers, no, nor any circumstance of it, Heb. vi. 10.*) special notice is taken of his great tenderness in providing old soft rags for Jeremiah to put under his arm-holes, to keep the cords from hurting him, wherewith he was to be drawn up, his arm-holes being, probably, galled by the cords wherewith he was let down. Nor did he throw the rags down to him, lest they should be lost in the mire, but carefully let them down, *v. 11, 12*. Note, Those that are in distress should not only be relieved, but relieved with compassion and marks of respect; all which shall be placed to account, and abound to a good account in the day of recompense. See what a good use even old rotten rags may be put to, which therefore should not be made waste of, any more than broken meat: even in the king's house, and *under the treasury* too, these were carefully preserved for the use of the poor or sick. Jeremiah is brought up out of the dungeon, and is now where he was, *in the court of the prison, v. 13*. Perhaps Ebed-melech could have made interest with the king to have got him his discharge from thence also, now that he had the king's ear, but he

thought him safer, and better provided for there, than he would be any where else. God can, when he pleases, make a prison to become a refuge and hiding-place to his people in distress and danger.

14. Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took Jeremiah the prophet unto him into the third entry that is in the house of the LORD: and the king said unto Jeremiah, I will ask thee a thing; hide nothing from me. 15. Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me? 16. So the king sware secretly unto Jeremiah, saying, As the LORD liveth, that made us this soul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hand of these men that seek thy life. 17. Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel, If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burnt with fire; and thou shalt live, and thy house: 18. But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand. 19. And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me. 20. But Jeremiah said, They shall not deliver thee. Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the LORD, which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live. 21. But if thou refuse to go forth, this is the word that the LORD hath showed me: 22. And, behold, all the women that are left in the king of Judah's house shall be brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes: and those women shall say, Thy friends have set thee on, and have prevailed against thee: thy feet are sunk in the mire, and they are turned away back. 23. So they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans; and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burnt with fire. 24. Then said Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die. 25. But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king, hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee; 26. Then thou shalt say unto them, I pre-

sented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there. 27. Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him: and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they left off speaking with him: for the matter was not perceived. 28. So Jeremiah abode in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken: and he was there when Jerusalem was taken.

In the foregoing chapter, we had the king in close conference with Jeremiah, and here again, though (v. 5.) he had given him up into the hands of his enemies; such a struggle there was, in the breast of this unhappy prince, between his convictions and his corruptions. Observe,

1. The honour that Zedekiah did to the prophet. When he was newly fetched out of the dungeon, he sent for him to advise with him privately. He met him in the *third entry*, or, as the margin reads it, *the principal entry*, that is in, or leads towards, or adjoins to, the house of the Lord, v. 14. In appointing this place of interview with the prophet, perhaps he intended to show a respect and reverence for the house of God, which was proper enough now that he was desiring to hear the word of God. Zedekiah would ask Jeremiah a thing; it should rather be rendered, a word; "I am here asking thee for a word of prediction, of counsel, of comfort, a word from the Lord, ch. xxxvii. 17. Whatever word thou hast for me, *hide it not from me*, let me know the worst." He had been told plainly what things would come to, in the foregoing chapter, but, like Balaam, he asks again, in hopes to get a more pleasing answer, as if God, who is in one mind, were altogether such a one as himself, who was in many minds.

2. The bargain that Jeremiah made with him, before he would give him his advice, v. 15. He would indent, (1.) For his own safety; Zedekiah would have him deal faithfully with him; "And if I do," says Jeremiah, "*wilt thou not put me to death? I am afraid thou wilt;*" (so some take it); "what else can I expect when thou art led blindfold by the princes?" Or, "Wilt thou promise that thou wilt not." Not that Jeremiah was backward to seal the doctrine he preached, with his blood, when he was called to it; but, in doing our duty, we ought to use all lawful means for our own preservation; even the apostles of Christ did so. (2.) He would indent for the success of his advice, being no less concerned for Zedekiah's welfare than for his own. He is willing to give him wholesome advice, and does not upbraid him with his unkindness in suffering him to be put into the dungeon, nor bid him go and consult with his princes, whose judgments he had such a value for. Ministers must with meekness instruct even those that oppose themselves, and render good for evil. He is desirous that he should *hear counsel, and receive instruction*. "*Wilt thou not hearken unto me? Surely thou wilt, I am in hopes to find thee pliable at last, and now in this thy day willing to know the things that belong to thy peace.*" Note, Then, and then only, there is hope of sinners, when they are willing to hearken to good counsel. Some read it as spoken despairingly; "*If I give thee counsel, thou wilt not hearken unto me; I have reason to fear thou wilt not, and then I might as well keep my counsel to myself.*" Note, Ministers have little heart to speak to those who have long and often turned a deaf ear to them. Now, as to this latter concern of Jeremiah's, Zede-

kiah makes him no answer, will not promise to hearken to his advice: though he desires to know what is the mind of God, yet he will reserve himself at liberty, when he does know it, to do as he thinks fit; as if it were the prerogative of a prince not to have his ruin prevented by good counsel. But, as to the prophet's safety, he promises him, upon the word of a king, and confirms his promise with an oath, that, whatever he should say to him, no advantage should be taken against him for it; *I will neither put thee to death, nor deliver thee into the hands of those that will*, v. 16. This, he thought, was a mighty favour, and yet Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, when Daniel read their doom, not only protected him, but preferred and rewarded him, Dan. ii. 29, 48. Zedekiah's oath on this occasion is solemn, and very observable; "*As the Lord liveth, who made us this soul*, who gave me my life, and thee thine, I dare not take away thy life unjustly, knowing that then I should forfeit my own to him that is the Lord of life." Note, God is the Father of spirits; souls are his workmanship, and they are more *fearfully and wonderfully made* than bodies are. The soul both of the greatest prince and of the poorest prisoner is of God's making; *He fashioned their hearts alike easily*. In all our appeals to God, and in all our dealings both with ourselves and others, we ought to consider this, that *the living God made us these souls*.

3. The good advice that Jeremiah gave him, with good reasons why he should take it, not from any prudence or politics of his own, but in the name of the Lord, the God of hosts and God of Israel; not as a statesman, but as a prophet, he advises him by all means to surrender himself and the city to the king of Babylon's princes; "*Go forth to them, and make the best terms thou canst with them*," v. 17. This was the advice he had given to the people, (v. 2.) and before, (ch. xxi. 9.) to submit to divine judgments, and not think of contending with them. Note, In dealing with God, that which is good counsel to the meanest, is so to the greatest, for *there is no respect of persons* with him. To persuade him to take this counsel, he sets before him good and evil, life and death. (1.) If he will tamely yield, he shall save his children from the sword, and Jerusalem from the flames. The white flag is yet hung out; if he will but acknowledge God's justice, he shall experience his mercy; *The city shall not be burnt, and thou shalt live, and thy house*. But, (2.) If he will obstinately stand it out, it will be the ruin both of his house and Jerusalem; (v. 18.) for when God judges he will overcome. This is the case of sinners with God; let them humbly submit to his grace and government, and they shall live; let them *take hold on his strength, that they may make peace, and they shall make peace*; but if they harden their hearts against his proposals, it will certainly be to their destruction; they must either bend or break.

4. The objection which Zedekiah made against the prophet's advice, v. 19. Jeremiah spake to him by prophecy, in the name of God, and therefore if he had had a due regard to the divine authority, wisdom, and goodness, as soon as he understood what the mind of God was, he should immediately have acquiesced in it, and resolved to observe it without disputing; but, as if it had been the dictate only of Jeremiah's prudence, he advances against it some prudential considerations of his own; but human wisdom is folly when it contradicts the divine counsels. All he suggests, is, "*I am afraid*, not of the Chaldeans, their princes are men of honour, but of the Jews, that are already gone over to the Chaldeans; when they see me follow them, who had so much opposed their going, they will laugh at me, and say, *Art thou also become weak as water?*"

Isa. xiv. 10. Now, (1.) It was not at all likely that he should be thus exposed and ridiculed, that the Chaldeans should so far gratify the Jews, or trample upon him, as to deliver him into their hands; nor that the Jews, who were themselves captives, should be in such a gay humour, as to make a jest of the misery of their prince. Note, We often frighten ourselves from our duty by foolish, causeless, groundless fears, that are merely the creatures of our own fancy and imagination. (2.) If he should be taunted at a little by the Jews, could he not despise it, and make light of it? What harm would it do him? Note, Those have very weak and fretful spirits indeed, that cannot bear to be laughed at for that which is both their duty and their interest. (3.) Though it had been really the greatest personal mischief that he could have imagined it to be, yet he ought to have ventured it, in obedience to God, and for the preservation of his family and city. He thought it would be looked upon as a piece of cowardice to surrender, whereas it would be really an instance of true courage cheerfully to bear a lesser evil, the mocking of the Jews, for the avoiding of a greater, the ruin of his family and kingdom.

5. The pressing importunity with which Jeremiah followed the advice he had given the king. He assures him that if he would comply with the will of God herein, the thing he feared should not come upon him; (v. 20.) *They shall not deliver thee up*, but treat thee as becomes thy character. He begs of him, after all the foolish games he had played, to manage wisely the last stake, and now at length to do well for himself; *Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord*, because it is his voice, so it shall be well unto thee. But he tells him what would be the consequence if he would not obey. (1.) He himself would fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, as implacable enemies, whom he might now make his friends, by throwing himself into their hands. If he must fall, he should contrive how to fall easily; *"Thou shalt not escape, as thou hopest to do,"* v. 23. (2.) He would himself be chargeable with the destruction of Jerusalem, which he pretended a concern for the preservation of; *"Thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire*, for by a little submission and self-denial thou mightest have prevented it." Thus subjects often suffer for the pride and wilfulness of their rulers, who should be their protectors, but prove their destroyers. (3.) Whereas he causelessly feared an unjust reproach for surrendering, he should certainly fall under a just reproach for standing it out, and that from women too, v. 22. The court-ladies who were left when Jehoiakim and Jeconiah were carried away, will now at length fall into the hands of the enemy, and they shall say, *"The men of thy peace, whom thou didst consult with, and confide in, and who promised thee peace if thou wouldest be ruled by them; they have set thee on, have encouraged thee to be bold and brave, and hold out to the last extremity; and see what comes of it? They, by prevailing upon thee, have prevailed against thee, and thou findest those thy real enemies, that would be thought thine only friends. Now thy feet are sunk in the mire, thou art embarrassed, and hast no way to help thyself; thy feet cannot get forward, but are turned away back."* Thus will Zedekiah be bantered by the women, when all his wives and children shall be made a prey to the conquerors, v. 23. Note, What we seek to avoid by sin, will be justly brought upon us by the righteousness of God. And those that decline the way of duty, for fear of reproach, will certainly meet with much greater reproach in the way of disobedience. *The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him*, Prov. x. 24.

6. The care which Zedekiah took to keep this conference private; (v. 24.) *Let no man know of*

these words. He does not at all incline to take God's counsel, nor so much as promise to consider of it; for so obstinate has he been to the calls of God, and so wilful in the ways of sin, that though he has good counsel given him, he seems to be given up to walk in his own counsels. He has nothing to object against Jeremiah's advice, and yet he will not follow it. Many hear God's words, but will not do them.

(1.) Jeremiah is charged to let no man know of what had past between the king and him. Zedekiah is concerned to keep it private, not so much for Jeremiah's safety, (for he knew the princes could do him no hurt without his permission,) but for his own reputation. Note, Many have really a better affection to good men and good things than they are willing to own. God's prophets are manifest in their consciences, (2 Cor. v. 11.) but they care not for manifesting that to the world; they would rather do them a kindness than have it known that they do; such, it is to be feared, *love the praise of men more than the praise of God*.

(2.) He is instructed what to say to the princes, if they should examine him about it. He must tell them that he was petitioning the king not to remand him back to the house of Jonathan the scribe, (v. 25, 26.) and he did tell them so, (v. 27.) and, no doubt, it was true: he would not let slip so fair an opportunity of engaging the king's favour; so that this was no lie or equivocation, but a part of the truth, which it was lawful for him to put them off with when he was under no obligation at all to tell them the whole truth. Note, Though we must be harmless as doves, so as never to tell a wilful lie, yet we must be wise as serpents, so as not needlessly to expose ourselves to danger by telling all we know.

CHAP. XXXIX.

As the prophet Isaiah, after he had largely foretold the deliverance of Jerusalem out of the hands of the king of Assyria, gave a particular narrative of the story, that it might appear how exactly the event answered to the prediction, so the prophet Jeremiah, after he had largely foretold the delivering of Jerusalem into the hands of the king of Babylon, gives a particular account of that sad event for the same reason. That melancholy story we have in this chapter, which serves to disprove the false, flattering prophets, and to confirm the word of God's messengers. We are here told, I. That Jerusalem, after eighteen months' siege, was taken by the Chaldean army, v. 1. 3. II. That king Zedekiah, attempting to make his escape, was seized, and made a miserable captive to the king of Babylon, v. 4. 7. III. That Jerusalem was burnt to the ground, and the people carried captive, except the poor, v. 8. 10. IV. That the Chaldeans were very kind to Jeremiah, and took particular care of him, v. 11. 14. V. That Ebed-melech too, for his kindness, had a protection from God himself in this day of desolation, v. 15. 18.

1. **I**N the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it. 2. And in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, the city was broken up. 3. And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, even Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim, Rab-saris, Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon. 4. And it came to pass that when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by

the gate betwixt the two walls; and he went out the way of the plain. 5. But the Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah, in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him. 6. Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah. 7. Moreover, he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon. 8. And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem. 9. Then Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard, carried away captive into Babylon the remnant of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to him, with the rest of the people that remained. 10. But Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard, left of the poor of the people, which had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

We were told, in the close of the foregoing chapter, that *Jeremiah abode patiently in the court of the prison, until the day that Jerusalem was taken*. He gave the princes no further disturbance by his prophesying, nor they him by their persecutions, for he had no more to say than what he had said, and, the siege being carried on briskly, God found them other work to do. See here what it came to.

1. The city is at length taken by storm; for how could it hold out when God himself fought against it? Nebuchadnezzar's army sat down before it in the ninth year of Zedekiah, in the tenth month, (v. 1.) in the depth of winter. Nebuchadnezzar himself soon after retired to take his pleasure, and left his generals to carry on the siege: they intermitted it awhile, but soon renewed it with redoubled force and vigour. At length, in the eleventh year, in the fourth month, about midsummer, they entered the city, the soldiers being so weakened by famine, and all their provisions being now spent, that they were not able to make any resistance, v. 2. Jerusalem was so strong a place, that nobody would have believed the enemy could ever have entered its gates, Lam. iv. 12. But sin had provoked God to withdraw his protection, and then, like Samson when his hair is cut, it is weak as other cities.

2. The princes of the king of Babylon take possession of the middle gate, v. 3. Some think that it was the same with that which is called the second gate, (Zeph. i. 10.) which is supposed to be in the middle wall that divided between one part of the city and the other; here they cautiously made a halt, and durst not go forward into so large a city, among men that perhaps would sell their lives as dear as they could, until they had given directions for the searching of all places, that they might not be surprised by any ambush. They sat in the middle gate, from thence to take a view of the city, and give orders. The princes are here named, rough and uncouth names they are, to intimate what a sad change sin had made; there where *Eliakim* and *Hilkiah*, who bare the name of the God of Israel,

used to sit, now sit *Nergal-sharezzer*, and *Samgar-nebo*, &c. who bare the names of the heathen gods. *Rab-saris* and *Rab-mag* are supposed to be not the names of distinct persons, but the titles of those whose names go before. *Sarsechim* was *Rab-saris*, that is, *captain of the guard*, and *Nergal-sharezzer*, to distinguish him from the other of the same name that is put first, is called *Rab-mag*, that is, *camp-master*, either muster-master, or quarter-master: these and the other great generals sat in the gate. And now was fulfilled what Jeremiah prophesied long since, (ch. i. 15.) that the families of the kingdoms of the north should set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem; justly do the princes of the heathen set up themselves there, where the gods of the heathen had been so often set up.

3. Zedekiah having, in disguise perhaps, seen the princes of the king of Babylon take possession of one of the gates of the city, thought it high time to shift for his own safety, and, loaded with guilt and fear, he went out of the city, under no other protection but that of the night, (v. 4.) which soon failed him, for he was discovered, pursued, and overtaken; though he made the best of his way, he could make nothing of it, could not get forward, but in the plains of Jericho fell into the hands of the pursuers; (v. 5.) thence he was brought prisoner to Riblah, where the king of Babylon passed sentence upon him as a rebel, not sentence of death, but, one may almost say, a worse thing. For, (1.) He slew his sons before his eyes, and they must all be little, some of them infants, for Zedekiah himself was now but thirty-two years of age. The deaths of these sweet babes must needs be so many deaths to himself, especially when he considered that his own obstinacy was the cause of it, for he was particularly told of this thing; (ch. xxxviii. 23.) *They shall bring forth thy wives and children to the Chaldeans*. (2.) He slew all the nobles of Judah, (v. 6.) probably not those princes of Jerusalem who had advised him to this desperate course, (it would be a satisfaction to him to see them cut off,) but the great men of the country, who were innocent of the matter. (3.) He ordered Zedekiah to have his eyes put out, (v. 7.) so condemning him to darkness, for life, who had shut his eyes against the clear light of God's word, and was of those princes who will not understand, but walk on in darkness, Ps. lxxvii. 5. (4.) He bound him with two brazen chains of fetters, (so the margin reads it,) to carry him away to Babylon, there to spend the rest of his days in misery. All this sad story we had before, 2 Kings xxv. 4, &c.

4. Some time after, the city was burnt, temple and palace and all, and the wall of it broken down, v. 8. "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! this comes of killing the prophets, and stoning them that were sent to thee. O Zedekiah, Zedekiah! this thou mightest have prevented, if thou wouldest but have taken God's counsel, and yielded in time.*"

5. The people that were left were all carried away captives to Babylon, v. 9. Now they must bid a final farewell to the land of their nativity, that pleasant land, and to all their possessions and enjoyments in it; must be driven some hundreds of miles, like beasts, before their conquerors, that were now their cruel masters; must lie at their mercy in a strange land, and be servants to them who would be sure to rule them with rigour. The word *Turant* is originally a Chaldee word, and is often used for *Lords* by the Chaldee paraphrast, as if the Chaldeans, when they were lords, tyrannized more than any other: we have reason to think that the poor Jews had reason to say so. Some few were left behind, but they were the poor of the people, that had nothing to lose, and therefore never made any resistance. And they not only had their liberty, and were left to tarry at

home, but the captain of the guard gave them vineyards and fields at the same time, such as they were never masters of before, v. 10. Observe here, (1.) The wonderful changes of Providence; some are abased, others advanced, (1 Sam. ii. 5.) the hungry are filled with good things, and the rich sent empty away. The ruin of some proves the rise of others. Let us therefore rejoice as though we rejoiced not, in our abundance, and weep as though we wept not, in our distresses. (2.) The just retributions of Providence; the rich had been proud oppressors, and now they were justly punished for their injustice; the poor had been patient sufferers, and now they are graciously rewarded for their patience, and amends made them for all their losses; for, *verily there is a God that judges in the earth*, even in this world, much more in the other.

11. Now Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying, 12. Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee. 13. So Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard, sent, and Nebushasban, Rab-saris, and Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, and all the king of Babylon's princes, 14. Even they sent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the prison, and committed him unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, that he should carry him home: so he dwelt among the people. 15. Now the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying, 16. Go and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be accomplished in that day before thee. 17. For I will deliver thee in that day, saith the LORD; and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid. 18. For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee; because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD.

Here we must sing of mercy, as in the former part of the chapter we sang of judgment, and must sing unto God of both. We may observe here,

I. A gracious providence concerning Jeremiah. When Jerusalem was laid in ruins, and all men's hearts failed them for fear, then might he lift up his head with comfort, knowing that his redemption drew nigh, as Christ's followers, when the second destruction of Jerusalem was hastening on, Luke xxi. 28. Nebuchadrezzar had given particular orders that care should be taken of him, and that he should be in all respects well used, v. 11, 12. Nebuzar-adan and the rest of the king of Babylon's princes observed these orders, and discharged him out of prison, and did every thing to make him easy, v. 13, 14.

Now we may look upon this,

1. As a very generous act of Nebuchadrezzar, who, though he was a haughty potentate, yet took cognizance of this poor prophet; doubtless he had received information concerning him from the de-

serters, that he had foretold the king of Babylon's successes against Judah and other countries, that he had pressed his prince and people to submit to him, and that he had suffered very hard things for so doing; and in consideration of all this, (though perhaps he might have heard also that he had foretold the destruction of Babylon at length,) he gave him these extraordinary marks of his favour. Note, It is the character of a great soul to take notice of the services and sufferings of the meanest. It was honourably done of the king, to give this charge, even before the city was taken, and of the captains to observe it, even in the heat of action, and it is recorded for imitation.

2. As a reproach to Zedekiah and the princes of Israel; they put him in a prison, and the king of Babylon and his princes took him out. God's people and ministers have often found fairer and kinder usage among strangers and infidels than among those that call themselves of the holy city. St. Paul found more favour and justice with king Agrippa than with Ananias the high-priest.

3. As the performance of God's promise to Jeremiah, in recompense for his services, (ch. xv. 11.) *I will cause the enemy to treat thee well in the day of evil.* Jeremiah had been faithful to his trust as a prophet, and now God approves himself faithful to him, and the promise he had made him. Now he is comforted, according to the time wherein he had been afflicted, and sees thousands fall on each hand, and himself safe. The false prophets fell by those judgments which they said should never come, (ch. xiv. 15.) which made their misery the more terrible to them. The true prophet escaped those judgments which he said would come, and that made his escape the more comfortable to him. The same that were the instruments of punishing the persecutors, were the instruments of relieving the persecuted; and Jeremiah thought never the worse of his deliverance for its coming by the hand of the king of Babylon, but saw the more of the hand of God in it. A fuller account of this matter we shall meet with in the next chapter.

II. A gracious message to Ebed-melech, to assure him of a recompense for his kindness to Jeremiah. This message was sent him by Jeremiah himself, who, when he returned him thanks for his kindness to him, thus turned him over to God to be his Paymaster. He relieved a prophet in the name of a prophet, and thus he had a prophet's reward. This message was delivered to him immediately after he had done that kindness to Jeremiah, but it is mentioned here after the taking of the city, to show that as God was kind to Jeremiah at that time, so he was to Ebed-melech for his sake; and it was a token of special favour to both, and they ought so to account it, that they were not involved in any of the common calamities. Jeremiah is bid to tell him, 1. That God would certainly bring upon Jerusalem the ruin that had been long and often threatened; and, for his further satisfaction, in having been kind to Jeremiah, he should see him abundantly proved a true prophet, v. 16. 2. That God took notice of the fear he had of the judgments coming. Though he was bravely bold in the service of God, yet he was afraid of the rod of God. The enemies were men of whom he was afraid. Note, God knows how to adapt and accommodate his comforts to the fears and griefs of his people, for he knows their souls in adversity. 3. That he shall be delivered from having a share in the common calamity; *I will deliver thee, I will surely deliver thee.* He had been instrumental to deliver God's prophet out of the dungeon, and now God promises to deliver him; for he will be behind-hand with none for any service they do, directly or indirectly, for his name; "Thou hast saved Jeremiah's life, that was pre-

cious to thee, and therefore *thy life shall be given thee for a prey.*" 4. The reason given for this distinguishing favour which God had in store for him, is, *because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord.* God, in recompensing men's services, has an eye to the principle they go upon in those services, and rewards according to those principles: and there is no principle of obedience that will be more acceptable to God, nor have a greater influence upon us, than a believing confidence in God. Ebed-melech trusted in God that he would own him, and stand by him, and then he was not afraid of the face of man. And those who trust God, as this good man did, in the way of duty, will find that their hope shall not make them ashamed in times of the greatest danger.

CHAP. XL.

We have attended Jerusalem's funeral pile, and have taken our leave of the captives that were carried to Babylon, not expecting to hear any more of them in this book, perhaps we may in Ezekiel, and must in this and the four following chapters observe the story of those few Jews that were left to remain in the land, after their brethren were carried away, and it is a very melancholy story; for, though at first there were some hopeful prospects of their well-doing, they soon appeared as obstinate in sin as ever, unhumiliated and unreformed, till all the rest of the judgments, threatened in *Deut. xxviii.* being brought upon them, that which in the last verse of that dreadful chapter completes the threatenings, was accomplished, *The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again.* In this chapter we have, I. A more particular account of Jeremiah's discharge, and his settlement with Gedaliah, v. 1. . 6. II. The great resort of the Jews that remained scattered in the neighbouring countries to Gedaliah, who was made their governor under the king of Babylon; and the good posture they were in for awhile under him, v. 7. . 12. III. A treacherous design formed against Gedaliah, by Ishmael, which we shall find executed in the next chapter, v. 13. . 16.

I. **T**HE word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him, being bound in chains among all that were carried away captive of Jerusalem and Judah, which were carried away captive unto Babylon. 2. And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The LORD thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place. 3. Now the LORD hath brought it, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you. 4. And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thy hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come, and I will look well unto thee; but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold, all the land is before thee: whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go. 5. Now, while he was not yet gone back, *he said,* Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over all the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people; or go

wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go. 6. Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, to Mizpah, and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.

The title of this part of the book, which begins the chapter, seems misapplied, (*The word which came to Jeremiah,*) for here is nothing of prophecy in this chapter, but it is to be referred to, *ch. xlii.* 7. where we have a message that God sent by Jeremiah to the captains and the people that remained, and the story betwixt, and that is only to introduce that prophecy, and show the occasion of it, that it may be the better understood; and Jeremiah, being himself concerned in the story, was the better able to give an account of it.

In these verses, we have Jeremiah's adhering, by the advice of Nebuzar-adan, to Gedaliah. It should seem that Jeremiah was very honourably fetched out of the court of the prison by the king of Babylon's princes, (*ch. xxxix. 14.*) but afterward, being found among the people in the city, when orders were given to the inferior officers to bind all they found that were of any fashion, in order to their being carried captives to Babylon, he, through ignorance and mistake, was bound among the rest, and hurried away. Poor man! he seems to have been born to hardship and abuse; *a man of sorrows* indeed! But when the captives were brought manacled to Ramah, not far off, where a council of war, or court martial, was held, for giving orders concerning them, Jeremiah was soon distinguished from the rest, and, by special order of the court, was discharged.

1. The captain of the guard solemnly owns him to be a true prophet; (*v. 2, 3.*) "*The Lord thy God, whose messenger thou hast been, and in whose name thou hast spoken, has by thee pronounced this evil upon this place;* they had fair warning given them of it, but they would not take the warning, and now the Lord hath brought it, and as by thy mouth he said it, so by my hand he hath done what he said." He seems thus to justify what he had done, and to glory in it, that he had been God's instrument to fulfil that which Jeremiah had been his messenger to foretell; and upon that account it was indeed the most glorious action he had ever done. He tells all the people that were now in chains before him, *It is because ye have sinned against the Lord, that this thing is come upon you.* The princes of Israel would never be brought to acknowledge this, though it was as evident as if it had been written with a sun-beam; but this heathen prince plainly sees it, that a people that had been so favoured as they had been by the divine goodness, would never have been abandoned thus, had they not been very provoking. The people of Israel had been often told this from the pulpit by their prophets, and they would not regard it; now they are told it from the bench of their conquerors, whom they dare not contradict, and who will make them regard it. Note, Sooner or later, men shall be made sensible that their sin is the cause of all their miseries.

2. He gives him free leave to dispose of himself as he thought fit. He loosed him from his chains a second time, (*v. 4.*) invited him to come along with him to Babylon, not as a captive, but as a friend, as a companion; and *I will set my eye upon thee*, so the word is: "*Not only I will look well to thee, but I will show thee respect, will countenance thee, and will see that thou be safe and well provided for.*"

If he was not disposed to go to Babylon, he might dwell where he pleased in his own country, for it was all now at the disposal of the conquerors. He may go to Anathoth if he please, and enjoy the field he had purchased there. A great change with this good man! He that but lately was tossed from one prison to another, may now walk at liberty from one possession to another.

3. He advises him to go to Gedaliah, and settle with him. This Gedaliah was made *governor of the land under the king of Babylon*, an honest Jew, who (it is probable) betimes went over with his friends to the Chaldeans, and approved himself so well, that he had this great trust put into his hands, *v. 5.* While Jeremiah was not yet gone back, but stood considering what he should do, Nebuzar-adan, perceiving him neither inclined to go to Babylon, nor determined whither to go, turned the scale for him, and bid him by all means go to Gedaliah. Sudden thoughts sometimes prove wise ones. But when he gave this counsel, he did not design to oblige him by it, nor will he take it ill if he do not follow it; *Go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee.* It is friendly in such cases to give advice, but unfriendly to prescribe, and to be angry if our advice be not taken. Let Jeremiah steer what course he pleases, Nebuzar-adan will agree to it, and believe he does for the best. Nor does he only give him his liberty, and an approbation of the measures he shall take, but provides for his support; he gave him *victuals*, and a present, either in clothes or money, and so let him go. See how considerate the captain of the guard was in his kindness to Jeremiah. He set him at liberty, but it was in a country that was laid waste, and in which, as the posture of it now was, he might have perished, though it was his own country, if he had not thus kindly furnished him with necessaries. Jeremiah not only accepted his kindness, but took his advice, and went to Gedaliah, to Mizpah, and dwelt with him, *v. 6.* Whether we may herein commend his prudence, I know not; the event does not commend it, for it did not prove at all to his comfort. However, we may commend his pious affection to the land of Israel, that, unless he were forced out of it, as Ezekiel and Daniel and other good men were, he would not forsake it, but chose rather to dwell with the poor in the holy land, than with princes in an unholy one.

7. Now when all the captains of the forces which were in the fields, even they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed unto him men, and women, and children, and of the poor of the land, of them that were not carried away captive to Babylon; 8. Then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men. 9. And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, sware unto them, and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. 10. As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to serve the Chaldeans which

will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer-fruits, and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken. 11. Likewise, when all the Jews that were in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and in Edom, and that were in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan: 12. Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer-fruits very much. 13. Moreover, Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, 14. And said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not. 15. Then Johanan the son of Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Let me go, I pray thee, and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know it: wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish? 16. But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing; for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.

We have, in these verses,

I. A bright sky opening upon the remnant of the Jews that were left in their own land, and a comfortable prospect given them of some peace and quietness, after the many years of trouble and terror with which they had been afflicted. Jeremiah indeed had never in his prophecies spoken of any such good days reserved for the Jews immediately after the captivity; but Providence seemed to raise and encourage such an expectation, and it would be to that miserable people as life from the dead. Observe the particulars.

1. Gedaliah, one of themselves, is made *governor in the land, by the king of Babylon, v. 7.* To show that he designed to make and keep them easy, he did not give this commission to one of the princes of Babylon, but to one of their brethren, who, they might be sure, would seek their peace. He was the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, one of the princes. We read of his father, (*ch. xxvi. 24.*) that he took Jeremiah's part against the people. He seems to be a man of great wisdom and a mild temper, and under whose government the few that were left might be very happy. The king of Babylon had a good opinion of him, and reposed a confidence in him, for to him he committed all that were left behind.

2. There is great resort to him from all parts, and all those that were now the Jews of the dispersion, came and put themselves under his government and protection. (1.) The great men that had escaped the Chaldeans by force, came and quietly submitted to Gedaliah for their own safety and common preservation. Divers are here named; (*v. 8.*) *they came*

with *their men*, their servants, their soldiers, and so strengthened one another; and the king of Babylon had such a good opinion of Gedaliah his delegate, that he was not at all jealous of the increase of their numbers, but rather pleased with it. (2.) The poor men that had escaped by flight into the neighbouring countries of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, were induced by the love they bore to their own land, to return to it again, as soon as they heard that Gedaliah was in authority there, v. 11, 12. Canaan itself would be an unsafe, unpleasant country, if there were no government or governors there, and those that loved it dearly would not come back to it till they heard there were. It would be a great reviving to them that were dispersed, to come together again; that were dispersed into foreign countries, to come together in their own country; that were under strange kings, to be under a governor of their own nation. See here, in wrath God remembered mercy, and yet admitted some of them upon a further trial of their obedience.

3. The model of this new government is drawn up and settled by an original contract, which Gedaliah confirmed with an oath, a solemn oath; (v. 9.) *He sware to them, and to their men*, it is probable, according to the warrant and instructions he had received from the king of Babylon, who empowered him to give them these assurances. (1.) They must own the property of their lands to be in the Chaldeans; "Come," (says Gedaliah,) "*fear not to serve the Chaldeans*. Fear not the *sin* of it." Though the divine law had forbidden them to make leagues with the heathen, yet the divine sentence had obliged them to yield to the king of Babylon. "Fear not the *reproach* of it, and the disparagement it will be to your nation; it is what God has brought you to, has bound you to, and it is no disgrace to any to comply with him. Fear not the *consequences* of it, as if it would certainly make you and yours miserable; no, you will find the king of Babylon not so hard a landlord as you apprehend him to be; if you will but live peaceably, peaceably you shall live; disturb not the government, and it will not disturb you. *Serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you*." If they should make any difficulty of doing personal homage, or should be apprehensive of danger, when the Chaldeans should come among them, Gedaliah, probably by instruction from the king of Babylon, undertakes upon all occasions to act for them, and make their applications acceptable to the king; (v. 20.) "*As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to serve the Chaldeans, to do homage to them in the name of the whole body, if there be occasion, to receive orders, and to pay them their tribute when they come to us*." All that passes between them and the Chaldeans shall pass through his hand; and if the Chaldeans put such a confidence in him, surely his own countrymen may venture to do it. Gedaliah is willing thus to give them the assurance of an oath, that he will do his part in protecting them, but being apt to err (as many good men are) on the charitable side, it did not require an oath from them, that they would be faithful to him, else the following mischief might have been prevented. However, protection draws allegiance, though it be not sworn; and, by joining in with Gedaliah, they did, in effect, consent to the terms of government, that they should *serve the king of Babylon*. But, (2.) Though they own the property of their lands to be in the Chaldeans, yet, upon that condition, they shall have the free enjoyment of them, and all the profits of them; (v. 10.) "*Gather ye wine and summer-fruits, and take them for your own use; put them in your vessels, to be laid up for winter-store, as those do that live in a land of peace, and hope to eat the labour of your hand*; nay, the labour of other people's hands, for you reap what

they sowed." Or perhaps they were the spontaneous products of that fertile soil, for which none had laboured. And accordingly we find, (v. 12.) that they *gathered wine and summer-fruits very much*, such as were at present upon the ground, for their corn-harvest was over some time before Jerusalem was taken. While Gedaliah was in care for the public safety, he left them to enjoy the advantages of the public plenty, and, for aught appears, demanded no tribute from them; for he sought not his own profit, but the profit of many.

II. Here is a dark cloud gathering over this infant state, and threatening a dreadful storm. How soon is this hopeful prospect blasted! For when God begins in judgment he will make an end. It is here intimated to us,

1. That *Baalis the king of the Ammonites* had a particular spite at Gedaliah, and was contriving to take him off, either out of malice to the nation of the Jews, whose welfare he hated the thought of, or a personal pique against Gedaliah, v. 14. Some make Baalis to signify the queen-mother of the king of the Ammonites, or queen-dowager, as if she were the first mover of this bloody and treacherous design. One would have thought this little remnant might have been safe, when the great king of Babylon protected it; and yet it is ruined by the artifices of this petty prince or princess. Happy they that have the King of kings on their side, who can take the *wise in their own craftiness*; for the greatest earthly king cannot with all his power secure us against fraud and treachery.

2. That he employed *Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah*, as the instrument of his malice, instigated him to murder Gedaliah; and that he might have a fair opportunity to do it, directed him to go and enrol himself among his subjects, and promise him fealty. Nothing could be more barbarous than the design itself, nor more base than the method of compassing it. How wretchedly is human nature corrupted and degenerated, (even in those that pretend to the best blood,) when it is capable of admitting the thought of such abominable wickedness! Ishmael was of the seed royal, and would therefore be easily tempted to envy and hate one that set up for a governor in Judah, who was not, as he was, of David's line, though he had ever so much of David's spirit.

3. That Johanan, a brisk and active man, having got scent of this plot, informed Gedaliah of it, yet taking it for granted he could not but know of it before, the proofs of the matter being so very plain; *Dost thou certainly know?* surely thou dost, v. 14. He gave him private intelligence of it, (v. 15.) hoping he would then take the more notice of it. He proffered his service to prevent it, by taking off Ishmael, whose very name was ominous to all the seed of Isaac; *I will slay him. Wherefore should he slay thee?* Herein he showed more courage and zeal than sense of justice; for if it be lawful to kill for prevention, who then can be safe, since malice always suspects the worst?

4. That Gedaliah, being a man of sincerity himself, would by no means give credit to the information given him of Ishmael's treachery. He said, *Thou speakest falsely of Ishmael*. Herein he discovered more good humour than discretion, more of the innocence of the dove than the wisdom of the serpent. Princes become uneasy to themselves, and all about them, when they are jealous. Queen Elizabeth said, that she would believe no more evil of her people, than a mother would believe of her own children; yet many have been ruined by being over-confident of the fidelity of those about them.

CHAP. XLI.

It is a very tragical story that is related in this chapter, and shows that *evil pursues sinners*. The black cloud that was gathering in the foregoing chapter, here bursts in a

dreadful storm. Those few Jews that escaped their captivity were proud to think that they were still in their own land, when their brethren were gone they knew not whither; were fond of *the wine and summer-fruits* they had gathered, and were very secure under Gedaliah's protectorship, when, on a sudden, even these remains prove ruins too. I. Gedaliah is barbarously slain by Ishmael, v. 1, 2. II. All the Jews that were with him were slain likewise, (v. 3.) and a pit filled with their dead bodies, v. 9. III. Some devout men, to the number of fourscore, that were going toward Jerusalem, were drawn in by Ishmael, and murdered likewise, v. 4. . 7. Only ten of them escaped, v. 8. IV. Those that escaped the sword were taken prisoners by Ishmael, and carried off toward the country of the Ammonites, v. 10. V. By the conduct and courage of Johanan, though the death of the slain is not revenged, yet the prisoners are recovered, and he now becomes their commander in chief, v. 11. . 16. VI. His project is to carry them into the land of Egypt, (v. 17, 18.) which we shall hear more of in the next chapter.

1. **N**OW it came to pass in the seventh month, *that* Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, and the princes of the king, even ten men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, to Mizpah; and there they did eat bread together in Mizpah. 2. Then arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, with the sword, and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land. 3. Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him, *even* with Gedaliah at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans that were found there, *and* the men of war. 4. And it came to pass, the second day after he had slain Gedaliah, and no man knew it, 5. That there came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, *even* fourscore men, having their beards shaven, and their clothes rent, and having cut themselves, with offerings and incense in their hand, to bring *them* to the house of the LORD. 6. And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went forth from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all along as he went: and it came to pass, as he met them, he said unto them, Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. 7. And it was *so*, when they came into the midst of the city, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah slew them, *and cast them* into the midst of the pit, he, and the men that *were* with him. 8. But ten men were found among them that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not; for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey. So he forbore, and slew them not among their brethren. 9. Now the pit wherein Ishmael had cast all the dead bodies of the men, whom he had slain because of Gedaliah, *was* it which Asa the king had made for fear of Baasha king of Israel; *and* Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with *them* that *were* slain. 10. Then Ishmael carried away

captive all the residue of the people that *were* in Mizpah, *even* the king's daughters, and all the people that remained in Mizpah, whom Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah carried them away captive, and departed to go over to the Ammonites.

It is hard to say which is more astonishing, God's permitting, or men's perpetrating, such villainies as here we find committed. Such base, barbarous, bloody work is here done by men, who by their birth should have been men of honour, by their religion just men, and this done upon those of their own nature, their own nation, their own religion, and now their brethren in affliction, when they were all brought under the power of the victorious Chaldeans, and smarting under the judgments of God, upon no provocation, nor with any prospect of advantage; all done, not only in cold blood, but with art and management. We have scarcely such an instance of perfidious cruelty in all the scripture; so that with John, when he saw the *woman drunk with the blood of the saints*, we may well wonder *with great admiration*. But God permitted it for the completing of the ruin of an unhumiliated people, and the filling up of the measure of their judgments, who had filled up the measure of their iniquities. Let it possess us with an indignation at the wickedness of men, and an awe of God's righteousness.

1. Ishmael and his party treacherously killed Gedaliah himself in the first place. Though the king of Babylon had made him a great man, had given him a commission to be *governor of the land* which he had conquered; though God had made him a good man, and a great blessing to his country, and his agency for its welfare was as life from the dead; yet neither could secure him. Ishmael was of the *seed royal*, (v. 1.) and therefore jealous of Gedaliah's growing greatness, and enraged that he should merit and accept a commission under the king of Babylon. He had *ten men* with him, that were *princes of the king* too, guided by the same peevish resentments that he was; these had been with Gedaliah before, to put themselves under his protection, (ch. xl. 8.) and now came again to make him a visit; *and they did eat bread together in Mizpah*. He entertained them generously, and entertained no jealousy of them, notwithstanding the information given him by Johanan. They pretended friendship to him, and gave him no warning to stand on his guard; he was in sincerity friendly to them, and did all he could to oblige them, but they that did *eat bread* with him *lifted up the heel* against him. They did not pick a quarrel with him, but watched an opportunity, when they had him alone, and assassinated him, v. 2.

2. They likewise put all to the sword that they found in arms there, both Jews and Chaldeans, all that were employed under Gedaliah, or were in any capacity to revenge his death, v. 3. As if enough of the blood of Israelites had not been shed by the Chaldeans, their own princes here mingled it with the blood of the Chaldeans. The vine-dressers and the husbandmen were busy in the fields, and knew nothing of this bloody massacre; so artfully was it carried on and concealed!

3. Some good, honest men, that were going all in tears to lament the desolations of Jerusalem, were drawn in by Ishmael, and murdered with the rest. Observe, (1.) From whence they came; (v. 5.) *from Shechem, Samaria, and Shiloh*, places that had been famous, but were now reduced; they belonged to the ten tribes, but there were *some* in

those countries that retained an affection for the worship of the God of Israel. (2.) Whether they were going; *to the house of the Lord*, the temple at Jerusalem, which, no doubt, they had heard of the destruction of, and were going to pay their respects to its ashes, to see its ruins, that their eye might affect their heart with sorrow for them. They *favoured the dust thereof*, Ps. cii. 14. They took *offerings and incense in their hand*, that if they should find any altar there, though it were but an altar of earth, and any priest ready to officiate, they might not be without something to offer; if not, yet they showed their good-will, as Abraham, when he came to the *place of the altar*, though the altar was gone. The people of God used to go rejoicing to the *house of the Lord*, but these went in the habit of mourners, with *their clothes rent*, and *their heads shaven*; for the providence of God loudly called to weeping and mourning, because it was not with the faithful worshippers of God as in months past. (3.) How they were decoyed into a fatal snare by Ishmael's malice. Hearing of their approach, he resolved to be the death of them too; so bloodthirsty was he! He seemed as if he hated every one that had the name of an Israelite, or the face of an honest man; these pilgrims toward Jerusalem he had a spite to, for the sake of their errand. Ishmael went out to meet them with crocodile's tears, pretending to bewail the desolations of Jerusalem as much as they, and, to try how they stood affected to Gedaliah and his government, he courted them into the town, and found them to have a respect for him, which confirmed him in his resolution to murder them. *He said, Come to Gedaliah*, pretending he would have them come, and live with him, when really he intended that they should come, and die with him, v. 6. They had heard such a character of Gedaliah, that they were willing enough to be acquainted with him; but Ishmael, when he had them *in the midst of the town*, fell upon them, and *slew them*, (v. 7.) and, no doubt, took the offerings they had, and converted them to his own use; for he that would not stick at such a murder, would not stick at sacrilege. Notice is taken of his disposing of the dead bodies of these, and the rest that he had slain; he tumbled them all into a great *pit*, (v. 7.) the same pit that Asa king of Judah had digged long before, either in the city, or adjoining to it, when he built or fortified Mizpah, (1 Kings xv. 22.) to be a frontier garrison against *Baasha king of Israel*, and *for fear of him*, v. 9. Note, Those that dig pits with a good intention know not what bad use they may be put to, one time or other. He slew so many, that he could not afford them each a grave, or would not do them so much honour, but threw them all promiscuously into one pit.

Among these last that were doomed to the slaughter, there were ten that obtained a pardon, by working, not on the compassion, but the covetousness, of those that had them at their mercy, v. 8. They *said to Ishmael*, when he was about to suck their blood, like an insatiable horse-leech, after that of their companions, *Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field*, country-treasures, large stocks upon the ground, abundance of such commodities as the country affords, *wheat and barley, and oil and honey*; intimating that they would discover it to him, and put him in possession of it all, if he would spare them. *Skin for skin, and all that a man has, will he give for his life*. This bait prevailed. Ishmael saved them, not for the love of mercy, but for the love of money. Here were riches kept for the owners thereof, *not to their hurt*, (Eccl. v. 13.) and to cause them to *lose their lives*, (Job xxxi. 39.) but to their good, and the preserving of their lives. Solomon observes, that sometimes *the ransom of a man's life is his riches*. But those who think thus

to bribe death, when it comes with commission, and plead with it, saying, *Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field*, will find death inexorable, and themselves wretchedly deceived.

4. He carried off the people prisoners; *the king's daughters*, whom the Chaldeans cared not for troubling themselves with, when they had the king's sons; and the poor of the land, the vine-dressers and husbandmen, that were committed to Gedaliah's charge, were all led away prisoners toward the country of the *Ammonites*; (v. 10.) Ishmael probably intending to make a present of them, as the trophies of his barbarous victory, to the king of that country that set him on. This melancholy story is a warning to us, never to be secure in this world. Worse may be yet to come then, when we think the worst is over; and that end of one trouble, which we fancy to be the end of all trouble, may prove to be the beginning of another, of a greater. These here thought, *Surely the bitterness of death and of captivity is past*; and yet some died by the sword, and others went into captivity. When we think ourselves safe, and begin to be easy, destruction may come that way that we little expected it. There is many a ship wrecked in the harbour. We can never be sure of peace on this side heaven.

11. But when Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done, 12. Then they took all the men, and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and found him by the great waters that *are* in Gibeon. 13. Now it came to pass, *that* when all the people which *were* with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, then they were glad. 14. So all the people that Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah cast about, and returned, and went unto Johanan the son of Kareah. 15. But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites. 16. Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, (after *that* he had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam,) *even* mighty men of war, and the women, and the children, and the eunuchs, whom he had brought again from Gibeon: 17. And they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which is by Beth-lehem, to go to enter into Egypt, 18. Because of the Chaldeans: for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon made governor in the land.

It had been well if Johanan, when he gave information to Gedaliah of Ishmael's treasonable design, though he could not obtain leave to kill Ishmael, and to prevent it that way, yet had stayed with Gedaliah; for he, and his captains, and their forces, might have been a life-guard to Gedaliah, and a

terror to Ishmael, and so have prevented the mischief, without the effusion of blood: but it seems, they were out upon some expedition, perhaps no good one, and so were out of the way when they should have been upon the best service. Those that affect to ramble are many times out of their place when they are most needed. However, at length they *hear of all the evil that Ishmael had done*, (v. 11.) and are resolved to try an after-game, which we have an account of in these verses.

1. We heartily wish Johanan could have taken revenge upon the murderers, but he prevailed only to rescue the captives. They that had shed so much blood, it was pity but their blood should have been shed; and it is strange that vengeance suffered them to live; yet it did. Johanan gathered what forces he could, and *went to fight with Ishmael*; (v. 12.) upon notice of the murders he had committed, (for though he concealed it for a time, (v. 4.) yet murder will out,) and which way he was gone, he pursued him, and overtook him by the great *pool of Gibeon*, which we read of, 2 Sam. ii. 13. And upon his appearing with such a force, Ishmael's heart failed him, his guilty conscience flew in his face, and he durst not stand his ground against an enemy that was something like a match for him. The most cruel are often the most cowardly. The poor captives *were glad when they saw Johanan, and the captains that were with him*, looking upon them as their deliverers, (v. 13.) and they immediately found a way to wheel about, and come over to them, (v. 14.) Ishmael not offering to detain them when he saw Johanan. Note, Those that would be helped must help themselves. These captives stayed not till their conquerors were beaten, but took the first opportunity to make their escape, as soon as they saw their friends appear, and their enemies thereby disheartened. Ishmael quitted his prey, to save his life, and *escaped with eight men*, v. 15. It seems, two of his ten men, that were his bunditti or assassins, spoken of, v. 1. either deserted him, or were killed in the engagement; but he made the best of his way to the Ammonites, as a perfect renegade, that had quite abandoned all relation to the commonwealth of Israel, though he was of the seed royal, and we hear no more of him.

2. We heartily wish that Johanan, when he had rescued the captives, would have sitten down quietly with them, and governed them peaceably, as Gedaliah did; but, instead of that, he is for leading them into the land of Egypt, as Ishmael would have led them into the land of the Ammonites; so that though he got the command over them in a better way than Ishmael did, and honestly enough, yet he did not use it much better. Gedaliah, who was of a meek and quiet spirit, was a great blessing to them; but Johanan, who was of a fierce and restless spirit, was set over them for their hurt, and to complete their ruin, even after they were, as they thought, redeemed. Thus did God still walk contrary to them. (1.) The resolution of Johanan and the captains was very rash; nothing would serve them but they would *go to enter into Egypt*, (v. 17.) and, in order to that, they encamped for a time in *the habitation of Chimham, by Bethlehem*, David's city. Probably it was some land which David gave to Chimham, the son of Barzillai, which, though it returned to David's family, at the year of Jubilee, yet still bore the name of *Chimham*. Here Johanan made his head-quarters, steering his course towards Egypt, either from a personal affection to that country, or an ancient national confidence in the Egyptians for help in distress. Some of the *mighty men of war*, it seems, had escaped; these he took with him, and *the women and children, whom he had recovered from Ishmael*, who were thus emptied from vessel to vessel, because they

were yet unchanged. (2.) The reason for this resolution was very frivolous. They pretended that *they were afraid of the Chaldeans*, that they would come and do I know not what with them, *because Ishmael had killed Gedaliah*, v. 18. I cannot think they really had any apprehensions of danger upon this account; for though it is true that the Chaldeans had caused enough to resent the murder of their viceroy, yet they were not so unreasonable, or unjust, as to revenge it upon those who appeared so vigorously against the murderers. But they only made use of this as a sham to cover that corrupt inclination of their unbelieving ancestors, which was so strong in them, to *return into Egypt*. Those will justly lose their comfort in real fears, that excuse themselves in sin with pretended fears.

CHAP. XLII.

Johanan and the captains being strongly bent upon going into Egypt, either their affections or politics advising them to take that course, they had a great desire that God should direct them to do so too; like Balaam, who, when he was determined to go curse Israel, asked God leave. Here is, I. The fair bargain that was made between Jeremiah and them about consulting God in this matter, v. 1. . 6. II. The message at large which God sent them, in answer to their inquiry; in which, 1. They are commanded and encouraged to continue in the land of Judah, and assured that if they did so, it should be well with them, v. 7. . 12. 2. They are forbidden to go to Egypt, and are plainly told that if they did, it would be their ruin, v. 13. . 18. 3. They are charged with dissimulation in their asking what God's will was in this matter, and disobedience when they were told what it was; and sentence is passed upon them for it, v. 19. . 22.

1. **THEN** all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people, from the least even to the greatest, came near, 2. And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, *even* for all this remnant; (for we are left *but* a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us;) 3. That the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do. 4. Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard *you*; behold, I will pray unto the LORD your God according to your words, and it shall come to pass, *that* whatsoever thing the LORD shall answer you, I will declare *it* unto you; I will keep nothing back from you. 5. Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the LORD thy God shall send thee to us. 6. Whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.

We have reason to wonder how Jeremiah the prophet escaped the sword of Ishmael; it seems he did escape, and it was not the first time that the LORD hid him. It is strange also that in these violent turns he was not consulted before now, and his advice asked and taken. But it should seem as if they knew not that a prophet was among them; though

this people were as brands plucked out of the fire, yet have they not returned to the Lord. This people has a revolting and a rebellious heart; and contempt of God and his providence, God and his prophets, is still the sin that most easily besets them. But now at length, to serve a turn, Jeremiah is sought out, and all the captains, Johanan himself not excepted, with all the people from the least to the greatest, make him a visit; they came near, (v. 1.) which intimates that hitherto they had kept at a distance from the prophet, and had been shy of him. Now here,

1. They desire him by prayer to ask direction from God what they should do in the present critical juncture, v. 2, 3. They express themselves wonderfully well. (1.) With great respect to the prophet. Though he was poor and low, and under their command, yet they apply themselves to him with humility and submissiveness, as petitioners for his assistance, which yet they intimate their own unworthiness of; *Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee.* They compliment him thus, in hopes to persuade him to say as they would have him say. (2.) With a great opinion of his interest in heaven; *"Pray for us, who know not how to pray for ourselves. Pray to the Lord thy God, for we are unworthy to call him ours, nor have we reason to expect any favour from him."* (3.) With a great sense of the need of divine direction. They speak of themselves as objects of compassion; *"We are but a remnant, but a few of many; how easily will such a remnant be swallowed up, and yet it is pity that it should. Thine eyes see what distress we are in, what a plunge we are at; if thou canst do any thing, help us."* (4.) With desire of divine direction; *"Let the Lord thy God take this ruin into his thoughts, and under his hand, and show us the way wherein we may walk, and may expect to have his presence with us, and the thing that we may do, the course we may take for our own safety."* Note, In every difficult, doubtful case, our eye must be up to God for direction. They then might expect to be directed by a *spirit of prophecy*, which is now ceased; but we may still in faith pray to be guided by a *spirit of wisdom* in our hearts, and the hints of Providence.

2. Jeremiah faithfully promises them to pray for direction for them, and, whatever message God should send to them by him, he would deliver it to them just as he received it, without adding, altering, or diminishing, v. 4. Ministers may hence learn, (1.) Conscientiously to pray for those who desire their prayers; *I will pray for you, according to your words.* Though they had slighted him, yet, like Samuel, when he was slighted, he will not *sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for them*, 1 Sam. xii. 23. (2.) Conscientiously to advise those who desire their advice, as near as they can to the mind of God, not *keeping back any thing that is profitable for them*, whether it be pleasing or no, but to *declare to them the whole counsel of God*, that they may approve themselves true to their trust.

3. They fairly promise that they will be governed by the will of God, as soon as they know what it is, (v. 5, 6.) and they had the impudence to appeal to God concerning their sincerity herein, though at the same time they dissembled; *"The Lord be a true and faithful Witness between us; do thou in the fear of God tell us truly what his mind is, and then we will in the fear of God comply with it; and for this, the Lord the Judge be judge between us."* Note, Those that expect to have the benefit of good ministers' prayers, must conscientiously hearken to their preaching, and be governed by it, as far as it agrees with the mind of God. Nothing could be better said than this here, *Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will*

obey the voice of the Lord our God, that it may be well with us. (1.) They now call God *their God*, for Jeremiah had encouraged them to call him so; (v. 4.) *I will pray to the Lord your God.* He is ours, and therefore *we will obey his voice.* Our relation to God strongly obliges us to obedience. (2.) They promise to *obey his voice*, because they sent the prophet to him to consult him. Note, We do not truly desire to know the mind of God if we do not fully resolve to comply with it when we do know it. (3.) It is an implicit, universal obedience that they here promise. They will do what God appoints them to do, *whether it be good, or whether it be evil*; "Though it may seem evil to us, yet we will believe that if God commands it, it is certainly good, and we must not dispute it, but do it. Whatever God commands, whether it be easy or difficult, agreeable to our inclinations or contrary to them, whether it be cheap or costly, fashionable or unfashionable, whether we get or lose by it in our worldly interests, if it be our duty, we will do it." (4.) It is upon a very good consideration that they promise this, a reasonable and powerful one, *that it may be well with us*; which intimates a conviction that they could not expect it should be well with them upon any other terms.

7. And it came to pass, after ten days, that the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah. 8. Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people, from the least even to the greatest, 9. And said unto them, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto whom ye sent me to present your supplication before him; 10. If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down; and I will plant you, and not pluck you up: for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you. 11. Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid, be not afraid of him, saith the Lord: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand. 12. And I will shew mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land. 13. But if ye say, We will not dwell in this land, neither obey the voice of the Lord your God, 14. Saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of a trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell: 15. And now, therefore, hear the word of the Lord, ye remnant of Judah; Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there; 16. Then it shall come to pass, that the sword, which ye feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine, whereof ye were afraid, shall follow close after you in Egypt; and there ye shall die. 17. So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt, to sojourn there; they shall die by

the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: and none of them shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them. 18. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, As mine anger and my fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so shall my fury be poured forth upon you, when ye shall enter into Egypt: and ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach; and ye shall see this place no more. 19. The LORD hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah, Go ye not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day. 20. For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the LORD your God, saying, Pray for us unto the LORD our God; and according unto all that the LORD our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it. 21. And now I have this day declared it to you; but ye have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God, nor any thing for the which he hath sent me unto you. 22. Now, therefore, know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go, and to sojourn.

We have here the answer which Jeremiah was sent to deliver to those who employed him to ask counsel of God.

I. It did not come immediately, not till *ten days after*, v. 7. They were thus long held in suspense, perhaps to punish them for their hypocrisy, or to show that Jeremiah did not speak of himself, nor what he would; for he could not speak when he would, but must wait for instructions. However, it teaches us to continue waiting upon God for direction in our way. *The vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak.*

II. When it did come, he delivered it publicly, both to the *captains*, and to all the *people*, from the meanest to those in the highest station; he delivered it fully and faithfully as he received it, as he had promised that he would keep nothing back from them. If Jeremiah had been to direct them by his own prudence, perhaps he could not have told what to advise them to, the case was so difficult; but what he has to advise, is what *the Lord the God of Israel saith*, to whom they had sent him, and therefore they were bound in honour and duty to observe it. And this he tells them,

1. That it is the will of God that they would stay where they were; and his promise, that if they do so, it shall undoubtedly be *well with them*; he would have them still to *abide in this land*, v. 10. Their brethren were forced out of it into captivity, and it was their affliction; let them therefore count it a mercy that they may stay in it, and a duty to stay in it. Let those whose lot is in Canaan, never quit it while they can keep it. It had been enough to oblige them, if God had only said, "I charge you upon your allegiance, to *abide still in the land*;" but he rather persuades them to it as a Friend than commands it as a Prince.

(1.) He expresses a very tender concern for them in their present calamitous condition; *It repenteth me of the evil that I have done unto you.* Though

they had shown small sign of their repenting of their sins, yet God, as one *grieved for the misery of Israel*, (Judg. x. 16.) begins to repent of the judgments he had brought upon them for their sins. Not that he changed his mind, but he was very ready to change his way, and to return in mercy to them. God's time to repent himself concerning his servants is when he sees that, as here, their strength is gone, and *there is none shut up or left*, Deut. xxxii. 36.

(2.) He answers the argument they had against *abiding in this land*; they *feared the king of Babylon*, (ch. xli. 18.) lest he should come, and avenge the death of Gedaliah upon them, though they were no way accessory to it, nay, had witnessed against it. The surmise was foreign and unreasonable; but if there had been any ground for it, enough is here said to remove it; (v. 11.) "*Be not afraid of the king of Babylon*, though he is a man of great might and little mercy, and a very arbitrary prince, whose will is a law, and therefore you are afraid he will, upon this pretence, though without colour of reason, take advantage against you; *be not afraid of him*, for that fear will bring a snare: fear not him, for *I am with you*; and if God be for you to save you, who can be against you to hurt you?" Thus has God provided to obviate and silence even the causeless fears of his people, which discourage them in the way of their duty; there is enough in the promises to do it.

(3.) He assured them that if they will still abide in this land, they shall not only be safe from the king of Babylon, but be made happy by the King of kings; "*I will build you and plant you*; you shall take root again, and be the new foundation of another state; a phoenix-kingdom, rising out of the ashes of the last." It is added, (v. 12.) *I will show mercies unto you.* Note, In all our comforts we may read God's mercies. God will show them mercy in this, that not only the king of Babylon shall not destroy them, but he shall *have mercy upon them*, and help to settle them. Note, Whatever kindness men do us, we must attribute it to God's kindness. He makes those whom he pities to be pitied even by those that *carried them captives*, Ps. cvi. 46. "The king of Babylon, having now the disposal of the country, shall *cause you to return to your own land*, shall settle you again in your own habitations, and put you in possession of the lands that formerly belonged to you." Note, God has made that our duty, which is really our privilege, and our obedience will be its own recompense. "*Abide in this land*, and it shall be your own land again, and you shall continue in it. Do not quit it, now that you stand so fair for the enjoyment of it again. Be not so unwise as to *forsake your own mercies for lying vanities*."

2. That as they tender the favour of God and their own happiness, they must by no means think of going into Egypt; not thither, of all places, that land out of which God had delivered their fathers, and which he had so often warned them not to make alliance with, nor to put confidence in. Observe here,

(1.) The sin they are supposed to be guilty of; (and to him that knew their hearts it was more than a supposition); "You begin to say, *We will not dwell in this land*, (v. 13.) we will never think that we can be safe in it, no, not though God himself undertake our protection; we will not continue in it, no, not in obedience to the voice of the Lord our God; he may say what he pleases, but we will do what we please; we will go into the land of Egypt, and there will we dwell, whether God give us leave, and go along with us, or no," v. 14. It is supposed that their hearts were upon it; "*If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt*, are obstinately resolved that ye will go, and sojourn there,

though God oppose you in it, both by his word and by his providence, then take what follows." Now the reason they go upon in this resolution, is, that *in Egypt we shall see no war, nor have hunger of bread*, as we have had for a long time in this land, v. 14. Note, It is folly to quit our place, especially to quit the holy land, because we meet with trouble in it; but greater folly to think by changing our place to escape the judgments of God, and that evil which pursues sinners in every way of disobedience, and which there is no escaping but by returning to our allegiance.

(2.) The sentence passed upon them for this sin, if they will persist in it. It is pronounced in God's name; (v. 15.) "*Hear the word of the Lord, ye remnant of Judah*, who think that because you are a remnant, you must be spared of course, (v. 2.) and indulged in your own humour. [1.] Did the sword and famine frighten them? Those very judgments shall pursue them into Egypt, shall overtake them, and overcome them, there; (v. 16, 17.) "You think, because war and famine have long been raging in this land, that they are entailed upon it; whereas, if you trust in God, he can make even this land a land of peace to you; you think they are confined to it, and if you can get clear of this land, you shall get out of the reach of them, but God will send them after you wherever you go." Note, The evils we think to escape by sin, we certainly and inevitably run ourselves upon. The men that go to Egypt, in contradiction to God's will, to escape the sword and famine, shall die in Egypt by sword and famine. We may apply it to the common calamities of human life; those that are impatient of them, and think to avoid them by changing their place, will find that they are deceived, and that they do not at all mend themselves; the grievances common to men will meet them wherever they go; all our removes in this world are but from one wilderness to another; still we are where we were. [2.] Did the desolations of Jerusalem frighten them? Were they willing to get as far as they could from them? They shall meet with the second part of them too in Egypt: (v. 18.) *As my anger and fury have been poured out here upon Jerusalem*, so they shall be poured out upon you in Egypt. Note, Those that have by sin made God their Enemy, will find him a consuming Fire, wherever they go. And then ye shall be an execration and an astonishment. The Hebrews were of old an abomination to the Egyptians; (Gen xliii. 32.) and now they shall be made more so than ever. When God's professing people mingle themselves with infidels, and make their court to them, they lose their dignity, and make themselves a reproach.

3. That God knew their hypocrisy in their inquiries of him, and that when they asked what he would have them to do, they were resolved to take their own way; and therefore the sentence which was before pronounced conditionally is made absolute. Having set before them good and evil, the blessing and the curse, in the close he makes application of what he had said. And here, (1.) He solemnly protests that he had faithfully delivered his message, v. 19. The conclusion of the whole matter is, "*Go not down into Egypt*, you disobey the command of God if you do, and what I have said to you will be a witness against you; for *know certainly*, that *whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear*, I have plainly admonished you, you cannot now plead ignorance of the mind of God." (2.) He charges them with base dissimulation in the application they made to him for divine direction; (v. 20.) "*You dissembled in your hearts*, you professed one thing and intended another, you promised what you never meant to perform." *You have used deceit against your souls*; so the margin

reads it: for those that think to put a cheat upon God, will prove in the end to have put a damning cheat upon themselves. (3.) He is already aware that they are determined to go contrary to the command of God; probably, they discovered it in their countenance and secret mutterings already, before he had finished his discourse. However, he spake from him who knew their hearts; "*Ye have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God*, ye have not a disposition to obey it." Thus Moses, in the close of his farewell sermon, had told them, (Deut. xxxi. 27, 29.) *I know thy rebellion and thy stiff neck—and that ye will corrupt yourselves*. Admire the patience of God, that he is pleased to speak to those who, he knows, will not regard him, and deal with those who, he knows, will deal treacherously, Isa. xlviii. 8. (4.) He therefore reads them their doom, ratifying what he had said before, *Know certainly that ye shall die by the sword*, v. 22. God's threatenings may be vilified, but cannot be nullified, by the unbelief of man. *Famine and pestilence* shall pursue these sinners; for there is no place privileged from divine arrests, nor can any malefactors go out of God's jurisdiction. *Ye shall die in the place whither ye desire to go*. Note, We know not what is good for ourselves; and that often proves afflictive, and sometimes fatal, which we are most fond of, and have our hearts most set upon.

CHAP. XLIII.

Jeremiah had faithfully delivered his message from God, in the foregoing chapter, and the case was made so very plain by it, that one would have thought there needed no more words about it; but we find it quite otherwise. Here is, I. The people's contempt of this message; they denied it to be the word of God, (v. 1..3.) and then made no difficulty of going directly contrary to it. Into Egypt they went, and took Jeremiah himself along with them, v. 4..7. II. God's pursuit of them with another message, foretelling the king of Babylon's pursuit of them into Egypt, v. 8..13.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, that when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking unto all the people all the words of the LORD their God, for which the LORD their God had sent him to them, *even* all these words, 2. Then spake Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely: the LORD our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there: 3. But Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon. 4. So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the LORD, to dwell in the land of Judah; 5. But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, took all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all nations whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah; 6. *Even* men, and women, and children, and the king's daughters, and every person that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah

the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah. 7. So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the LORD. Thus came they *even* to Tahpanhes.

What God said to the builders of Babel, may be truly said of this people that Jeremiah is now dealing with; *Now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do*, Gen. xi. 6. They have a fancy for Egypt, and to Egypt they will go, whatever God himself saith to the contrary. Jeremiah made them hear all he had to say, though he saw them uneasy at it; it was what the Lord their God had sent him to speak to them, and they shall have it all. And now let us see what they have to say to it.

1. They deny it to be a message from God; *Johanan, and all the proud men, said to Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely*, v. 2. See here, (1.) What was the cause of their disobedience, it was pride; only by that comes contention both with God and man: they were *proud men* that gave the lie to the prophet. They could not bear the contradiction of their sentiments, and the control of their designs, no, not by the divine wisdom, by the divine will itself. Pharaoh said, *Who is the Lord that I should obey him?* Exod. v. 2. The proud, unhumiliated heart of man is one of the most daring enemies God has on this side hell. (2.) What was the colour for their disobedience. They would not acknowledge it to be the word of God; *The Lord hath not sent thee* on this errand to us. Either they were not convinced that what was said came from God, or, (which I rather think,) though they were convinced of it, they would not own it. The light shone strong in their face, but they either shut their eyes against it, or would not confess that they saw it. Note, The reason why men deny the scriptures to be the word of God, is, because they are resolved not to conform themselves to scripture-rules, and so an obstinate infidelity is made the sorry subterfuge of a wilful disobedience. If God had spoken to them by an angel, or as he did from mount Sinai, they would have said that it was a delusion. Had they not consulted Jeremiah as a prophet? Had not he waited to receive instructions from God what to say to them? Had not what he said all the usual marks of prophecy upon it? Was not the prophet himself embarked in the same bottom with them? What interests could he have separate from theirs? Had he not always approved himself an Israelite indeed; And had not God proved him a prophet indeed? Had any of his words ever fallen to the ground? Why truly they had some good thoughts of Jeremiah, but they suggest, (v. 3.) *Baruch sets thee on against us*. A likely thing, that Baruch should be in a plot to deliver them into the hands of the Chaldeans; and what would he get by that? If Jeremiah and he had been so well affected to the Chaldeans as they would represent them, they would have gone away at first with Nebuzar-adan, when he courted them, to Babylon, and not have staid to take their lot with this despised, ungrateful remnant. But the best services are no fence against malice and slander. Or, if Baruch had been so ill disposed, could they think Jeremiah would be so influenced by him as to make God's name an authority to patronize so villanous a purpose? Note, Those that are resolved to contradict the great ends of the ministry, are industrious to bring a bad name upon it. When men will persist in sin, they represent those that would turn them from it as designing men for themselves, nay, as ill-designing men against their neighbours. It is well for persons who are thus misrepresented, that their witness is in heaven, and their record on high.

2. They determine to go to Egypt however. They resolve not to dwell in the land of Judah, as God had ordered them, (v. 4.) but to go themselves with one consent, and to take all that they had under their power along with them to Egypt. Those that came from all the nations whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah, out of a sincere affection to that land, they would not leave to their liberty, but forced them to go with them into Egypt, (v. 5.) *men, women, and children*, (v. 6.) a long journey into a strange country, an idolatrous country, a country that had never been kind or faithful to Israel; yet thither they would go, though they deserted their own land and threw themselves out of God's protection. It is the folly of men, that they know not when they are well off, and often ruin themselves by endeavouring to mend themselves; and it is the pride of great men to force those they have under their power to follow them, though ever so much against their duty and interest. These proud men compelled even Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch his scribe to go along with them to Egypt; they carried them away as prisoners, partly to punish them, (and a greater punishment they could not inflict upon them than to force them against their consciences; theirs is the worst of tyranny who say to men's souls, even to good men's souls, *Bow down, that we may go over*,) partly to put some reputation upon themselves and their own way; though the prophets were under a force, they would make the world believe that they were voluntary in going along with them. Who could have blamed them for acting contrary to the word of the Lord, if the prophets themselves had acted so? They came to Tahpanhes, a famous city of Egypt, (so called from a queen of that name, 1 Kings xi. 19.) the same with Hanes; (Isa. xxx. 4.) it was now the metropolis, for Pharaoh's house was there, (v. 9.) no place could serve these proud men to settle in but the royal city, and near the court; so little mindful were they of Joseph's wisdom, who would have his brethren settle in Goshen. If they had had the spirit of Israelites, they would have chosen rather to dwell in the wilderness of Judah than in the most pompous, populous cities of Egypt.

3. Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying, 9. Take great stones in thy hand, and hide them in the clay in the brick-kiln, which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah; 10. And say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them. 11. And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are for death, to death; and such as are for captivity, to captivity; and such as are for the sword, to the sword. 12. And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives; and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment; and he shall go forth from thence in peace. 13. He shall break also the images of Beth-she-

mesh, that is in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire

We have here, as also in the next chapter, Jeremiah prophesying in Egypt. Jeremiah was now in Tahpanhes, for there his lords and masters were; he was there among idolatrous Egyptians and treacherous Israelites; but there, 1. *He received the word of the Lord; it came to him.* God can find his people, with the visits of his grace, wherever they are; and when his ministers are bound, yet the word of the Lord is not bound. The spirit of prophecy was not confined to the land of Israel. When Jeremiah went into Egypt, not out of choice, but by constraint, God withdrew not his wonted favour from him. 2. *What he received of the Lord he delivered to the people.* Wherever we are, we must endeavour to do good, for that is our business in this world.

Now we find two messages which Jeremiah was appointed and intrusted to deliver, when he was in Egypt. We may suppose that he rendered what services he could to his countrymen in Egypt, at least as far as they would be acceptable, in performing the ordinary duties of a prophet, praying for them, and instructing and comforting them; but only two messages of his, which he had received immediately from God, are recorded; one in this chapter, relating to Egypt itself, and foretelling its destruction; the other in the next chapter, relating to the Jews in Egypt.

God had told them before, that if they went into Egypt, the sword they feared should follow them; here he tells them further, that the sword of Nebuchadrezzar, which they were in a particular manner afraid of, should follow them.

I. This is foretold by a sign. Jeremiah must take *great stones*, such as are used for foundations, and *lay them in the clay of the furnace, or brick-kiln*, which is in the open way, or beside the way that leads to Pharaoh's house, (v. 9.) some remarkable place in view of the royal palace. Egypt was famous for brick-kilns, witness the slavery of the Israelites there, whom they forced to make bricks, (Exod. v. 7.) which perhaps was now remembered against them. The foundation of Egypt's desolation was laid in those brick-kilns, in that clay. This he must do, not in the sight of the Egyptians, (they knew not Jeremiah's character,) but in the sight of the men of Judah to whom he was sent, that since he could not prevent their going into Egypt, he might bring them to repent of their going.

II. It is foretold in express words, as express as can be,

1. That the king, the present king of Babylon, Nebuchadrezzar, the very same that had been employed in the destruction of Jerusalem, should come in person against the land of Egypt, should make himself master even of this royal city, that he should set his throne in that very place where these stones were laid, v. 10. This minute circumstance is particularly foretold, that, when it was accomplished, they might be put in mind of the prophecy, and confirmed in their belief of the extent and certainty of the divine prescience, to which the smallest and most contingent events are evident. God calls Nebuchadrezzar *his servant*, because herein he executed God's will, accomplished his purposes, and was instrumental to carry on his designs. Note, The world's princes are God's servants, and he makes what use he pleases of them, and even those that know him not, nor aim at his honour, are the tools which his providence makes use of.

2. That he should destroy many of the Egyptians, and have them all at his mercy; (v. 11.) *He*

shall smite the land of Egypt; and though it has been always a warlike nation, yet none shall be able to make head against him, but whom he will he shall slay, and by what sort of death he will, whether pestilence, (for that is here meant by death, as ch. xv. 2.) by shutting them up in places infected, or by the sword of war or justice, in cold blood or hot. And whom he will, he shall save alive, and carry into captivity. The Jews, by going into Egypt, brought the Chaldeans thither, and so did but ill repay those that entertained them. They who promised to protect Israel from the king of Babylon exposed themselves to him.

3. That he shall destroy the idols of Egypt, both the temples, and the images, of their gods; (v. 12.) *He shall burn the houses of the gods of Egypt*, but it shall be with a fire of God's kindling; the fire of God's wrath fastens upon them, and then he burns some of them, and carries others captive, Isa. xlvii. 1. *Beth-shemesh, or the house of the sun*, was so called from a temple there built to the sun, where at certain times there was a general meeting of the worshippers of the sun. The statues or standing images there he shall break in pieces, (v. 13.) and carry away the rich materials of them. It intimates that he should lay all waste, when even the temple and the images should not escape the fury of the victorious army. The king of Babylon was himself a great idolater, and a patron of idolatry, he had his temples and images in honour of the sun, as well as the Egyptians, and yet he is employed to destroy the idols of Egypt. Thus God sometimes makes one wicked man, or wicked nation, a scourge and plague to another.

4. That he shall make himself master of the land of Egypt, and none shall be able to plead its cause, or avenge its quarrel; (v. 12.) *He shall array himself with the rich spoils of the land of Egypt*, both beautify and fortify himself with them; he shall array himself with them as ornaments and as armour, and this, though it shall be a rich and heavy booty; being expert in war, and expeditious, he shall slip on with as much ease, and in as little time, in comparison, as a shepherd slips on his garment, when he goes to turn out his sheep in a morning. And, being loaded with the wealth of many other nations, the fruits of his conquests, he shall make no more of the spoils of the land of Egypt than of a shepherd's coat. And when he has taken what he pleases, (as Benhadad threatened to do, 1 Kings xx. 6.) he shall go forth in peace, without any molestation given him, or any precipitation for fear of it, so effectually reduced shall the land of Egypt be. This destruction of Egypt by the king of Babylon is foretold, Ezek. xxix. 19, and xxx. 10. Babylon lay at a great distance from Egypt, and yet from thence the destruction of Egypt comes; for God can make those judgments strike home which are far-fetched.

CHAP. XLIV.

In this chapter we have, I. An awakening sermon which Jeremiah preached to the Jews in Egypt, to reprove them for their idolatry, notwithstanding the warnings given them both by the word and the rod of God, and to threaten the judgments of God against them for it, v. 1. . 14. II. The impudent and impious contempt which the people put upon this admonition, and their declared resolution to persist in their idolatries notwithstanding, in despite of God and Jeremiah, v. 15. . 19. III. The sentence passed upon them for their obstinacy, that they should all be cut off and perish in Egypt, except a very small number; and, as a sign or earnest of it, the king of Egypt should shortly fall into the hands of the king of Babylon, and be unable any longer to protect them, v. 20. . 30.

1. **T**HE word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews which dwell in the land of Egypt, which dwell at Migdol, and

at Tahpanhes, and at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, saying, 2. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Ye have seen all the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, and upon all the cities of Judah; and, behold, this day they are a desolation, and no man dwelleth therein; 3. Because of their wickedness which they have committed, to provoke me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, and to serve other gods, whom they knew not, *neither* they, you, nor your fathers. 4. Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending *them*, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. 5. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods. 6. Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted and desolate, as at this day. 7. Therefore now thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel, Wherefore commit ye this great evil against your souls, to cut off from you man and woman, child and suckling, out of Judah, to leave you none to remain; 8. In that ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense unto other gods in the land of Egypt, whither ye be gone to dwell, that ye might cut yourselves off, and that ye might be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth? 9. Have ye forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and the wickedness of the kings of Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, and your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they have committed in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem? 10. They are not humbled *even* unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I set before you, and before your fathers. 11. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah. 12. And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, and fall in the land of Egypt; they shall *even* be consumed by the sword and by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine; and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach. 13. For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: 14. So that none

of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there; for none shall return but such as shall escape.

The Jews in Egypt are now dispersed into divers parts of the country, into *Migdol* and *Noph*, and other places, and Jeremiah is sent on an errand from God to them, which he delivered either when he had the most of them together, in *Pathros*, (v. 15.) or going about from place to place preaching to this purport. He delivered this message in the name of *the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel*, and in it,

1. God puts them in mind of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, which, though the captives *by the rivers of Babylon* were daily mindful of them, (Ps. cxxxvii. 1.) the fugitives in the cities of Egypt seem to have forgotten, and needed to be put in mind of, though these desolations, one would have thought, had not been so long out of sight as to become out of mind; (v. 2.) *Ye have seen* what a deplorable condition Judah and Jerusalem are brought into; now will you consider whence those desolations came? From the wrath of God; it was his fury and his anger that kindled the fire which made Jerusalem and the cities of Judah waste and desolate; (v. 6.) whoever were the instruments of the destruction, they were but instruments: it was a destruction from the Almighty.

2. He puts them in mind of the sins that brought those desolations upon Judah and Jerusalem; it was for *their wickedness*, that was it that *provoked God to anger*, and especially their idolatry, their *serving other gods*, (v. 3.) and giving that honour to counterfeit deities, the creatures of their own fancy, and the work of their own hands, which should have been given to the true God only; they forsook the God who was known among them, and whose name was great, for gods that *they knew not*, upstart deities, whose original was obscure, and not worth taking notice of; "*Neither they, nor you, nor your fathers*, could give any rational account why the *God of Israel* was exchanged for such impostors." *They knew not* that they were gods, nay, they could not but know that they were *no gods*.

3. He puts them in mind of the frequent fair warning he had given them by his word not to serve other gods, the contempt of which warnings was a great aggravation of their idolatry, v. 4. *The prophets* were sent with a great deal of care to call to them, saying, *Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate*. It becomes us to speak of sin with the utmost dread and detestation as an *abominable thing*; it is certainly so, for it is that which God hates, and we are sure that *his judgment is according to truth*. Call it grievous, call it odious, that we may by all means possible put ourselves and others out of love with it. It becomes us to give warning of the danger of sin, and the fatal consequences of it, with all seriousness and earnestness; "*Oh, do not do it! If you love God, do not, for it is provoking to him; if you love your own souls, do not, for it is destructive to them.*" Let conscience do this for us in an hour of temptation, when we are ready to yield. O take heed; *do not this abominable thing* which the Lord hates; for if God hates it, thou shouldst hate it. But did they regard what God said to them? No! *They hearkened not, nor inclined their ear*, (v. 5.) they still persisted in their idolatries; and you see what came of it, therefore God's *anger was poured out* upon them, *as at this day*. Now this was intended for warning to you, who have not only heard the judgments of God's mouth, as they did, but have likewise seen the judgments of his hand, by which

you should be startled and awakened, for they were inflicted *in terrorem*—that others might hear and fear, and do no more as they did, lest they should fare as they fared."

4. He reproves them for, and upbraids them with, their continued idolatries, now that they were come into Egypt; (v. 8.) *You burn incense to other gods in the land of Egypt; therefore God forbade them to go into Egypt, because he knew it would be a snare to them.* Those whom God sent into the land of the Chaldeans, though that was an idolatrous country, were there, by the power of God's grace, weaned from idolatry; but those who went against God's mind into the land of the Egyptians, were there by the power of their own corruption, more wedded than ever to their idolatries; for when we thrust ourselves without cause or call into places of temptation, it is just with God to leave us to ourselves. In doing this, (1.) They did a great deal of injury to themselves and their families; "*You commit this great evil against your souls, (v. 7.)* you wrong them, you deceive them with that which is false, you destroy them, for it will be fatal to them." Note, In sinning against God, we sin against our own souls. "It is the ready way to cut yourselves off from all comfort and hope, (v. 8.) to cut off your name and honour; so that you will, both by your sin and by your misery, become a curse and a reproach among all nations. It will become a proverb, As wretched as a Jew. It is the ready way to cut off from you all your relations, all that you should have joy of, and have your families built up in, *man and woman, child and suckling*, so that Judah shall be a land lost for want of heirs." (2.) They filled up the measure of the iniquity of their fathers, and, as if that had been too little for them, added to it; (v. 9.) "*Have ye forgotten the wickedness of those who are gone before you, that you are not humbled for it as you ought to be, and afraid of the consequences of it?*" *Have you forgotten the punishments of your fathers?* So some read it. "Do you not know how dear their idolatry cost them? And yet dare you continue in that vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, though you received the curse with it?" He reminds them of the sins and punishments of the kings of Judah, who, great as they were, escaped not the judgments of God for their idolatry; yea, and they should have taken warning by the wickedness of their wives, who had seduced them to idolatry. In the original it is, *And of his wives*, which, Dr. Lightfoot thinks, tacitly reflects upon Solomon's wives, particularly his Egyptian wives, to whom the idolatry of the kings of Judah owed its original. "Have you forgotten this, and what came of it, that you dare venture upon the same wicked courses?" (See Neh. xiii. 18, 26.) "Nay, to come to your own times, *Have you forgotten your own wickedness and the wickedness of your wives*, when you lived in prosperity in Jerusalem, and what ruin it brought upon you? But, alas! to what purpose do I speak to them?" (says God to the prophet, v. 10.) "*They are not humbled, unto this day*, by all the humbling providences that they have been under. *They have not feared nor walked in my law.*" Note, Those that walk not in the law of God, thereby show that they are destitute of the fear of God.

5. He threatens their utter ruin for their persisting in their idolatry, now that they were in Egypt. Judgment is given against them, as before, (ch. xlii. 22.) that they shall perish in Egypt; the decree is gone forth, and shall not be called back; they set their faces to go into the land of Egypt, (v. 12.) were resolute in their purpose against God, and now God is resolute in his purpose against them; *I will set my face to cut off all Judah, v. 11.* They that think not only to affront but to confront God Al-

mighty, will find themselves outfaced; for the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, Ps. xxxiv. 16. It is here threatened, concerning these idolatrous Jews in Egypt, (1.) *That they shall all be consumed*, without exception, no degree or order among them shall escape; *They shall fall, from the least to the greatest, (v. 12.) high and low, rich and poor.* (2.) *That they shall be consumed* by the very same judgments which God made use of for the punishment of Jerusalem, the sword, famine, and pestilence, v. 12, 13. They shall not be wasted by natural deaths, as Israel in the wilderness, but by these sore judgments, which, by flying into Egypt, they thought to get out of the reach of. (3.) That none (except a very few that will narrowly escape) shall ever return to the land of Judah again, v. 14. They thought, being nearer, that they stood fairer for a return to their own land than those that were carried to Babylon; yet those shall return, and these shall not; for the way in which God has promised us any comfort is much surer than that in which we have projected it for ourselves. Observe, Those that are fretful and discontented will be uneasy, and fond of change, wherever they are. The Israelites, when they were in the land of Judah, desired to go into Egypt; (ch. xlii. 22.) but when they were in Egypt, they desired to return to the land of Judah again; they lifted up their soul to it, (so it is in the margin,) which denotes an earnest desire. But because they would not dwell there when God commanded it, they shall not dwell there when they desire it. If we walk contrary to God, he will walk contrary to us. How can those expect to be well off, who would not know when they were so, though God himself told them?

15. Then all the men which knew that their wives had burnt incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying, 16. *As for the word which thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee.* 17. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. 18. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine. 19. And when we burnt incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink-offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink-offerings unto her without our men?

We have here the people's obstinate refusal to submit to the power of the word of God in the mouth of Jeremiah. We have scarcely such an instance of downright, daring contradiction to God himself as this, or such an avowed rebellion of the carnal mind. Observe,

I. The persons who thus set God and his judgment at defiance; it was not some one that was thus

obstinate, but the generality of the Jews; and they were such as knew either themselves or their wives to be guilty of the idolatry Jeremiah had reproved, v. 15. We find, 1. That the women had been more guilty of idolatry and superstition than the men, not because the men stuck closer to the true God and the true religion than the women, but, 1 fear, because they were generally atheists, and were for no God and no religion at all, and therefore could easily allow their wives to be of a false religion, and to worship false gods. 2. That consciousness of guilt made them impatient of reproof; *They knew that their wives had burnt incense unto other gods, and that they had countenanced them in it, and the women that stood by knew that they had joined with them in their idolatrous usages; so that what Jeremiah said touched them in a sore place, which made them kick against the pricks, as children of Belial, that will not bear the yoke.*

II. The reply which these persons made to Jeremiah, and in him to God himself; it is in effect the same with theirs who had the impudence to say to the Almighty, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.*

1. They declare their resolution not to do as God commanded them, but what they themselves had a mind to do; that is, they would go on to worship the moon, here called *the queen of heaven*; yet some understand it of the sun, which was much worshipped in Egypt, (*ch. xliii. 13.*) and had been so at Jerusalem; (*2 Kings xxiii. 11.*) and they say, that the Hebrew word for the sun being feminine, it may not unfitly be called *the queen of heaven*. And others understand it of all the *hosts of heaven*, or the *frame of heaven*, the whole machine, *ch. vii. 18.* These daring sinners do not now go about to make excuses for their refusal to obey, nor suggest that Jeremiah spake from himself, and not from God, (*as before, ch. xliii. 2.*) but they own that he spake to them *in the name of the Lord*, and yet tell him flatly, in so many words, *"We will not hearken unto thee; we will do that which is forbidden, and run the venture of that which is threatened."* Note, Those that live in disobedience to God commonly grow worse and worse, and the heart is more and more hardened by the *deceitfulness of sin*. Here is the genuine language of the rebellious heart; *We will certainly do whatsoever thing goes forth out of our own mouth*, let God and his prophets say what they please to the contrary. What they said, many think, who yet have not arrived at such a degree of impudence as to speak it out. It is that which the young man would be at *in the days of his youth*; he would walk in the way of his heart, and the sight of his eyes, and would have and do every thing he has a mind to, *Eccl. xi. 9.*

2. They give some sort of reasons for their resolution; for the most absurdly and unreasonably wicked men will have something to say for themselves, till the day comes when *every mouth shall be stopped*.

(1.) They plead many of those things which the advocates for Rome make the marks of a true church, and not only justify but magnify themselves with; and these here have as much right to them as they have. [1.] They plead antiquity; We are resolved to burn incense to the *queen of heaven*, for our fathers did so; it is a practice that pleads prescription; and why should we pretend to be wiser than our fathers? [2.] They plead authority; they that had power practised it themselves, and prescribed it to others; *Our kings and our princes* did it, whom God set over us, and who were of the seed of David. [3.] They plead unity; it was not here and there one that did it, but *we*, we all with one consent, we that are a *great multitude*, (*v. 15.*) we did it. [4.] They plead universality; it was not

done here and there, but *in the cities of Judah*. [5.] They plead visibility; it was not done in a corner, in dark and shady groves only, but *in the streets*, openly and publicly. [6.] They plead that it was the practice of the mother-church, the holy see; it was not now learned first in Egypt, but it had been done in *Jerusalem*. [7.] They plead prosperity; *then had we plenty of bread, and of all good things, we were well, and saw no evil*. All the former pleas, I fear, were too true in fact; God's witnesses against their idolatry were few and hid; Elijah thought that he was left alone: and this last might perhaps be true as to some particular persons, but as to their nation, they were still under rebukes for their rebellions, and there was *no peace to them that went out or came in*, *2 Chron. xv. 5.* But supposing all to be true, yet this does not at all excuse them from idolatry; it is the law of God that we must be ruled and judged by, not the practice of men.

(2.) They suggest that the judgments they had of late been under, were brought upon them for leaving off to burn incense to the *queen of heaven*, *v. 18.* So perversely did they misconstrue Providence, though God, by his prophets, had so often explained it to them, and the thing itself spake the direct contrary! *Since we forsook our idolatries, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword*; the true reason of which was, because they still retained their idols in their heart, and an affection to their old sins; but they would have it thought that it was because they had forsaken the acts of sin. Thus the afflictions which should have been for their welfare, to part between them and their sins, being misinterpreted, did but confirm them in their sins. Thus, in the first ages of Christianity, when God chastised the nations by any public calamities for opposing the Christians, and persecuting them, they put a contrary sense upon the calamities, as if they were sent to punish them for conniving at the Christians, and tolerating them, and cried, *Christians ad leones—Throw the Christians to the lions*. Yet, if it had been true, as they said here, that since they returned to the service of the true God, the God of Israel, they had been in want and trouble, was that a reason why they should revolt from him again? That was as much as to say that they served not him, but their own bellies. Those who know God, and put their trust in him, will serve him, though he starve them, though he slay them, though they never see a good day with him in this world, being well assured that they shall not lose by him in the end.

(3.) They plead that though the women were most forward and active in their idolatries, yet they did it with the consent and approbation of their husbands; the women were busy to make cakes for meat-offerings to the *queen of heaven*, and to prepare and pour out the drink-offerings, *v. 19.* We found, before, that it was their work, *ch. vii. 18.* "But did we do it without our husbands, privately and unknown to them, so as to give them occasion to be jealous of us? No; the fathers kindled the fire, while the women kneaded the dough; the men that were our heads, whom we were bound to learn of, and to be obedient to, taught us to do it by their example." Note, It is sad when those who are in the nearest relation to each other, who should quicken each other to that which is good, and so help one another to heaven, harden each other in sin, and so ripen one another for hell. Some understand this as spoken by the husbands, (*v. 15.*) who plead that they did not do it without their men, without their elders and rulers, their great men, and men in authority; but because the making of the cakes, and the pouring out of the drink-offerings, are expressly spoken of as the women's work, (*ch. vii. 18.*) it

seems rather to be understood as their plea: but it was a frivolous plea. What would it avail them to be able to say that it was according to their husbands' mind, when they knew that it was contrary to their God's mind?

20. Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men, and to the women, and to all the people which had given him *that* answer, saying, 21. The incense that ye burnt in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye, and your fathers, your kings, and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them, and came it *not* into his mind? 22. So that the LORD could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, *and* because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day. 23. Because you have burnt incense, and because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day. 24. Moreover, Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the LORD, all Judah that *are* in the land of Egypt; 25. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows. 26. Therefore hear ye the word of the LORD, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the LORD, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah, in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord God liveth. 27. Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good; and all the men of Judah that *are* in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them. 28. Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah; and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs. 29. And this *shall be* a sign unto you, saith the LORD, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil: 30. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give Pharaoh-hopra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of

them that seek his life, as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon his enemy, and that sought his life.

Daring sinners may speak many a bold word, and many a big word, but, after all, God will have the last word; for he will be justified when he speaks; and all flesh, even the proudest, shall be silent before him. Prophets may be run down, but God cannot; nay, here the prophet would not.

I. Jeremiah has something to say to them from himself, which he could say without a spirit of prophecy, and that was to rectify their mistake, (a wilful mistake it was,) concerning the calamities they had been under, and the true intent and meaning of them. They said that these miseries came upon them because they had now *left off burning incense to the queen of heaven*; "No," says he, "it was because you had formerly done it, not because you had now left it off." When they gave him that answer, he immediately replied, (v. 20.) that the *incense* which they and their fathers had burnt to other gods did indeed go unpunished a great while, for God was long-suffering toward them, and during the day of his patience it was, perhaps, as they said, *well with them*, and they *saw no evil*: but at length they grew so provoking, *that the Lord could no longer bear*, (v. 22.) but began a controversy with them, whereupon some of them did a little reform, their sins left them, for so it might be said, rather than that they left their sins. But their old guilt being still upon the score, and their corrupt inclinations still the same, God remembered against them the idolatries of *their fathers, their kings, and their princes, in the streets of Jerusalem*, which they, instead of being ashamed of, gloried in, as a justification of them in their idolatries; they *all came into his mind*, (v. 21.) all the *abominations which they had committed*, (v. 22.) and all their disobedience to the voice of the Lord, (v. 23.) all were brought to account; and therefore, to punish them for these is *their land a desolation and a curse, as at this day*; (v. 22.) therefore, not for their late reformation, but for their old transgressions, is all *this evil happened to them, as at this day*, v. 23. Note, The right understanding of the cause of our troubles, one would think, should go far toward the cure of our sins. *Whatever evil comes upon us, it is because we have sinned against the Lord*, and should therefore *stand in awe, and sin not*.

II. Jeremiah has something to say to them, to the women particularly, from the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; they have given their answer, now let them hear God's reply, v. 24. *Judah, that dwells in the land of Egypt*, has God speaking to them, even there, that is their privilege; let them observe what he says, that is their duty, v. 26. Now God, in his reply, tells them plainly,

1. That since they were fully determined to persist in their idolatry, God was fully determined to proceed in his controversy with them; if they would go on to provoke him, he would go on to punish them, and see which would get the better at last. God repeats what they had said; (v. 25.) "*You and your wives are agreed in this obstinacy, you have spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hands*, you have said it, and you stand to it, have said it, and go on to do accordingly, *We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven*," as if, though it were a sin, yet their having vowed to do it, were sufficient to justify them in the doing of it; whereas no man can by his vow make that lawful to himself, much less duty, which God has already made sin. "Well," (says God,) "*you will accomplish, you*

will perform, your wicked vows: now hear what is my vow, what I have sworn by my great name," and if the Lord hath sworn, he will not repent, since they have sworn and will not repent; with the froward he will show himself froward, Ps. xviii.

25. He hath sworn, (1.) That what little remains of religion there were among them, should be lost, v. 26. Though they joined with the Egyptians in their idolatries, yet they continued upon many occasions to make mention of the name of Jehovah, particularly in their solemn oaths; they said, *Jehovah liveth*, he is the living God, so they owned him to be, though they worshipped dead idols; they swear, *The Lord liveth*; (ch. v. 2.) but I fear they retained this form of swearing more in honour of their nation than of their God; but God declares that his name shall no more be thus named by any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, that there shall be no Jews remaining to use this dialect of their country, or, if there be, they shall have forgotten it, and shall learn to swear, as the Egyptians do, *by the life of Pharaoh*, not of Jehovah. Note, Those are very miserable whom God has so far left to themselves, that they have quite forgotten their religion, and lost all the remains of their good education. Or, this may intimate that God would take it as an affront to him, and would resent it accordingly, if they did make mention of his name, and profess any relation to him. (2.) He hath sworn, that what little remnant of people there was there, shall all be consumed; (v. 27.) *I will watch over them for evil*; no opportunity shall be let slip to bring some judgment upon them, *until there be an end of them*, and they be quite rooted out. Note, To those whom God finds impenitent sinners he will be found an implacable Judge. And when it comes to this, they shall know (v. 28.) *whose word shall stand, mine, or theirs*. They said that they should recover themselves, when they returned to worship the queen of heaven; God says that they should ruin themselves; and now the event will show which was in the right. The contest between God and sinners is, whose word shall stand, whose will shall be done, who shall get the better. Sinners say that they shall have peace, though they go on; God says they shall have no peace. But when God judges, he will overcome; God's word shall stand, and not the sinner's.

2. He tells them that a very few of them should escape the sword, and in process of time return into the land of Judah, a small number, (v. 28.) next to none, in comparison with the great numbers that should return out of the land of the Chaldeans. This seems designed to upbraid those who boasted of their numbers that concurred in sin; there were none to speak of, that did not join in idolatry; "Well," says God, "and there shall be as few that shall escape the sword and famine."

3. He gives them a sign that all these threatenings shall be accomplished in their season, that they shall be consumed here in Egypt, and shall quite perish: *Pharaoh-hophra*, the present king of Egypt, shall be delivered into the hand of his enemies that seek his life; of his own rebellious subjects, (so some,) under Amasis, who usurped his throne; of *Nebuchadnezzar*, king of Babylon, (so others,) who invaded his kingdom; the former is related by Herodotus, the latter by Josephus. It is likely that this Pharaoh had tempted the Jews to idolatry by promises of his favour; however they depended upon him for his protection, and it would be more than a presage of their ruin, it would be a step towards it, if he were gone. They expected more from him than from Zedekiah king of Judah, he was a more potent and politic prince; "But," says God, "*I will give him into the hand of his enemies*, as I gave Zedekiah." Note, Those creature-comforts and

confidences that we promise ourselves most from, may fail us as soon as those that we promise ourselves least from, for they are all what God makes them, not what we fancy them.

The sacred history records not the accomplishment of this prophecy, but its silence is sufficient; we hear no more of these Jews in Egypt, and therefore conclude them, according to this prediction, lost there; for no word of God shall fall to the ground.

CHAP. XLV.

The prophecy we have in this chapter concerns Baruch only, yet is intended for the support and encouragement of all the Lord's people that serve him faithfully, and keep close to him in difficult, trying times. It is placed here after the story of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews, but was delivered long before, in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, as was the prophecy in the next chapter, and, probably, those that follow. We here find, 1. How Baruch was terrified when he was brought into trouble for writing and reading Jeremiah's roll, v. 1.-3. 2. How his fears were checked with a reproof for his great expectations, and silenced with a promise of special preservation, v. 4, 5. Though Baruch was only Jeremiah's scribe, yet this notice is taken of his frights, and this provision made for his comfort; for God despises not any of his servants, but graciously concerns himself for the meanest and weakest, for Baruch the scribe as well as for Jeremiah the prophet.

1. **T**HE word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, 2. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch; 3. Thou didst say, Wo is me now! for the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest. 4. Thus shalt thou say unto him, The LORD saith thus; Behold, *that* which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land. 5. And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD; but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.

How Baruch was employed in writing Jeremiah's prophecies, and reading them, we had an account, ch. xxxvi. and how he was threatened for it by the king, warrants being out for him, and he forced to abscond, and how narrowly he escaped under a divine protection, to which story this chapter should have been subjoined, but that, having reference to a private person, it is here thrown into the latter end of the book, as St. Paul's epistle to Philemon is put after his other epistles. Observe,

1. The consternation that poor Baruch was in when he was sought for by the king's messengers, and obliged to hide his head, and the notice which God took of it. He cried out, *Wo is me now!* v. 3. He was a young man setting out in the world, he was well-affected to the things of God, and was willing to serve God and his prophet; but when it came to suffering, he was desirous to be excused, being an ingenious man, and a scholar, he stood fair for preferment, and now to be driven into a corner, and in danger of a prison, or worse, was a great disappointment to him. When he read the roll publicly, he hoped to gain reputation by it, that it would have made him to be taken notice of and employed, but when he found that, instead of that, it exposed

him to contempt, and brought him into disgrace, he cried out, "I am undone, I shall fall into the pursuers' hands, and be imprisoned, and put to death, or banished; *the Lord has added grief to my sorrow*, has loaded me with one trouble after another; after the grief of writing and reading the prophecies of my country's ruin, I have the sorrow of being treated as a criminal for so doing; and though another might make nothing of this, yet, for my part, I cannot bear it, it is a burthen too heavy for me; *I fainted in my sighing*, or, *I am faint with my sighing*, it just kills me, and *I find no rest*, no satisfaction in my own mind, I cannot compose myself as I should and would to bear it, nor have I any prospect of relief or comfort." Baruch was a good man, but, we must say, this was his infirmity. Note, (1.) Young beginners in religion, like fresh-water sailors, are apt to be discouraged with the little difficulties which they commonly meet with at first in the service of God. They do but *run with the footmen*, and it *wearies them*; they *faint* upon the very dawning of *the day of adversity*, and it is an evidence that *their strength is small*, (Prov. xxiv. 10.) that their faith is weak, and that they are yet but babes, who cry for every hurt and every fright. (2.) Some of the best and dearest of God's saints and servants, when they have seen storms rising, have been in frights, and apt to make the worst of things, and to disquiet themselves with melancholy apprehensions, more than there was cause for. (3.) God takes notice of the frets and discontents of his people, and is displeased with them. Baruch should have rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer in such a good cause, and with such good company, but, instead of that, he is vexed at it, and blames his lot, nay, and reflects upon his God, as if he had dealt hardly with him; what he said was spoken in a heat and passion, but God was offended, as he was with Moses, who paid dear for it, when, his spirit being provoked, he *shook unadvisedly with his lips*. *Thou didst say* so and so, and it was not well said; God keeps account of what we say, even when we speak in haste.

2. The reproach that God gave him for talking at this rate. Jeremiah was troubled to see him in such an agitation, and knew not well what to say to him; he was loath to chide him, and yet thought he deserved it; was willing to comfort him, and yet knew not which way to go about it; but God tells him what he *shall say to him*, v. 4. Jeremiah could not be certain what was at the bottom of these complaints and fears, but God sees it; they came from his corruptions; that the hurt therefore might not be healed slightly, he searches the wound, and shows him that he had raised his expectations too high in this world, and had promised himself too much from it, and that made the distress and trouble he was in so very grievous to him, and so hard to be borne. Note, The frowns of the world would not disquiet us as they do, if we did not foolishly flatter ourselves with the hopes of its smiles, and court and covet them too much. It is our over-fondness for the good things of this present time, that makes us impatient under its evil things. Now God shows him that it was his fault and folly, at this time of day especially, either to desire, or to look for, an abundance of the wealth and honour of this world. For, (1.) The ship was sinking; ruin was coming upon the Jewish nation, an utter and universal ruin; "*That which I have built*, to be a house for myself, *I am breaking down*, and *that which I have planted*, to be a vineyard for myself, *I am plucking up*, *even this whole land*, the Jewish church and state; and dost thou now *seek great things for thyself*? Dost thou expect to be rich and honourable, and to make a figure now? Na." (2.) "It is absurd for thee to be now printing thine own cabin. Canst thou expect to be

high, when all are brought low, to be full when all about thee are empty?" To seek ourselves more than the public welfare, especially to seek great things to ourselves, when the public is in danger, is very unbecoming Israelites. We may apply it to this world, and our state in it; God, in his providence, is breaking down and pulling up, every thing is uncertain and perishing, we cannot expect any continuing city here. What folly is it then to *seek great things for ourselves* here, where every thing is little, and nothing certain!

3. The encouragement that God gave him to hope that though he should not be great, yet he should be safe; "*I will bring evil upon all flesh*, all nations of men, all orders and degrees of men, *but thy life will I give to thee for a prey*," (*thy soul*, so the word is,) "*in all places whither thou goest*. Thou must expect to be hurried from place to place, and, wherever thou goest, to be in danger, but thou shalt escape, though often very narrowly, shalt have thy life, but it shall be as a prey, which is got with much difficulty and danger; thou shalt be saved as by fire." Note, The preservation and continuance of life are very great mercies, and we are bound to account them such, as they are the prolonging of our opportunity to glorify God in this world, and to get ready for a better; and at some times, especially when the arrows of death fly thick about us, they are a signal favour, and what we ought to be thankful for, and, while we have them, must not complain, though we be disappointed of the great things we expected. *Is not the life more than meat?*

CHAP. XLVI.

How judgment began at the house of God we have found in the foregoing prophecy and history; but now we shall find that it did not end there; in this and the following chapters we have predictions of the desolations of the neighbouring nations, and those brought upon them too mostly by the king of Babylon, till at length Babylon itself comes to be reckoned with. The prophecy against Egypt is here put first, and takes up this whole chapter; in which we have, I. A prophecy of the defeat of Pharaoh-necho's army by the Chaldean forces at Carchemish, which was accomplished soon after, in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, v. 1. 12. II. A prophecy of the descent which Nebuchadnezzar should make upon the land of Egypt, and his success in it, which was accomplished some years after the destruction of Jerusalem, v. 13. 26. III. A word of comfort to the Israel of God in the midst of these calamities, v. 27, 28.

1. **T**HE word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles; 2. Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh-necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah. 3. Order ye the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle. 4. Harness the horses; and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with *your* helmets; furbish the spears, and put on the brigandines. 5. Wherefore have I seen them dismayed and turned away back? and their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back: *for fear was round about*, saith the LORD. 6. Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; they shall stumble, and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates. 7. Who is this *that* cometh up as a flood, whose wa-

ters are moved as the rivers? 8. Egypt riseth up like a flood, and *his* waters are moved like the rivers; and he saith, I will go up, *and* will cover the earth; I will destroy the city, and the inhabitants thereof. 9. Come up, ye horses; and rage, ye chariots; and let the mighty men come forth; the Ethiopians and the Libyans, that handle the shield; and the Lydians, that handle *and* bend the bow. 10. For this *is* the day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood; for the Lord God of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates. 11. Go up into Gilead and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines; *for* thou shalt not be cured. 12. The nations have heard of thy shame, and thy cry hath filled the land: for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, *and* they are fallen both together.

The first verse is the title of that part of this book which relates to the neighbouring nations, and follows here. It is *the word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah against the Gentiles*; for God is King and Judge of nations, knows them, and will call them to an account, who know him not, nor take any notice of him. Both Isaiah and Ezekiel prophesied against these nations that Jeremiah here has a several saying to, and with reference to the same events. In the Old Testament we have *the word of the Lord against the Gentiles*, in the New Testament we have *the word of the Lord for the Gentiles*, that they who were *afar off* are made nigh.

He begins with Egypt, because they were of old Israel's oppressors, and of late their deceivers, when they put confidence in them. In these verses he foretells the overthrow of the army of Pharaoh-necho, by Nebuchadnezzar, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, which was so complete a victory to the king of Babylon, that thereby he recovered from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates, *all that pertained to the king of Egypt*, and so weakened him that he came not again any more out of his land, (as we find, 2 Kings, xxiv. 7.) and so made him pay dear for his expedition against the king of Assyria four years before, in which he slew Josiah, 2 Kings xxiii. 29. This is the event that is here foretold in lofty expressions of triumph over Egypt thus foiled; which Jeremiah would speak of with a particular pleasure, because the death of Josiah, which he had lamented, was now avenged on Pharaoh-necho. Now here,

1. The Egyptians are upbraided with the mighty preparations they made for this expedition, in which the prophet calls to them to do their utmost, for so they would; "Come then, *order the buckler*, let the weapons of war be got ready," v. 3. Egypt was famous for *horses*, let them be *harnessed*, and the cavalry well mounted; *Get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth*, &c. v. 4. See what preparations the children of men make, with abundance of care and trouble, and at a vast expense, to kill one another, as if they did not die fast enough of themselves! He compares their marching out upon this expedition to the rising of their river Nile; (v. 7, 8.)

Egypt now rises up like a flood, scorning to keep within its own banks, and threatening to overflow all the neighbouring lands; it is a very formidable army that the Egyptians bring into the field upon this occasion; the prophet summons them, (v. 9.) *Come up, ye horses; rage, ye chariots*; he challenges them to bring all their confederate troops together, *the Ethiopians*, that descended from the same stock with the Egyptians, (Gen. x. 6.) and were their neighbours and allies; *the Libyans and Lydians*, both seated in Africa, to the west of Egypt, and from them the Egyptians fetched their auxiliary forces: let them strengthen themselves with all the art and interest they have, yet it shall be all in vain, they shall be shamefully defeated notwithstanding, for God will fight against them, and against him *there is no wisdom, nor counsel*, Prov. xxi. 30, 31. It concerns them that go forth to war, not only to *order the buckler and harness the horses*, but to repent of their sins, and pray to God for his presence with them, and that they may have it to keep themselves from every wicked thing.

2. They are upbraided with the great expectations they had from this expedition, which were quite contrary to what God intended in bringing them together. They knew their own thoughts, and God knew them, and sat in heaven, and laughed at them; *but they knew not the thoughts of the Lord, for he gathers them as sheaves into the floor*, Mic. iv. 11, 12. Egypt saith, (v. 8.) *I will go up, I will cover the earth, and none shall hinder me; I will destroy the city*, whatever city it is that stands in my way; like Pharaoh of old, *I will pursue, I will overtake*. The Egyptians say that they shall have a day of it, but God saith, that it shall be his day; *This is the day of the Lord God of hosts*, (v. 10.) the day in which he will be exalted in the overthrow of the Egyptians. They meant one thing, but God meant another; they designed it for the advancement of their dignity, and the enlargement of their dominion, but God designed it for the great abasement and weakening of their kingdom. It is *a day of vengeance* for Josiah's death; it is a day of *sacrifice* to divine justice, to which multitudes of the sinners of Egypt shall fall as victims. Note, When men think to magnify themselves by pushing on unrighteous enterprises, let them expect that God will glorify himself by blasting them, and cutting them off.

3. They are upbraided with their cowardice and inglorious flight when they come to an engagement; (v. 5, 6.) "*Wherefore have I seen them*, notwithstanding all these mighty and vast preparations, and all these expressions of bravery and resolution, when the Chaldean army faces them, *dismayed, turned back*, quite disheartened, and no spirit left in them." (1.) They make a shameful retreat, even *their mighty ones*, who, one would think, should have stood their ground, flee a flight, flee by consent, make the best of their way, flee in confusion, and with the utmost precipitation; they have neither time nor heart to *look back*, but *fear is round about them*, for they apprehend it so. And yet, (2.) They cannot make their escape: they have the shame of flying, and yet not the satisfaction of saving themselves by flight; they might as well have stood their ground, and died upon the spot; for even *the swift shall not flee away*. The lightness of their heels shall fail them when it comes to the trial, as well as the stoutness of their hearts; the *mighty* shall not escape, nay, they are *beaten down*, and broken to pieces. *They shall stumble in their flight, and fall toward the north*, toward their enemy's country; for such confusion were they in when they took to their feet, that, instead of making homeward, as men usually do in that case, they made forward. Note, *The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong*. Valiant men are not always victorious.

4. They are upbraided with their utter inability ever to recover this blow, which should be fatal to their nation, *v. 11, 12*. The damsel, *the daughter of Egypt*, that lived in great pomp and state, is sorely wounded by this defeat. Let her now seek for *balm in Gilead*, and physicians there; let her use all the *medicines* her wise men can prescribe for the healing of this hurt, and the repairing of the loss sustained by this defeat; but all *in vain, no cure shall be* to them; they shall never be able to bring such a powerful army as this into the field again. "*The nations that rang of thy glory and strength, have now heard of thy shame, how shamefully thou wast routed, and how thou art weakened by it.*" It needs not be spread by the triumphs of the conquerors, the shrieks and outcries of the conquered will proclaim it; *thy cry hath filled the country about*. For when they fled several ways, one *mighty man stumbled* upon another, and dashed against another, such confusion were they in, so that *both together* became a prey to the pursuers, an easy prey. A thousand such dreadful accidents there should be, which should fill the country with the cry of them that were overcome. *Let not the mighty man therefore glory in his might*, for the time may come when it will stand him in no stead.

13. The word that the LORD spake to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon should come and smite the land of Egypt. 14. Declare ye in Egypt, and publish in Migdol, and publish in Noph, and in Tahpanhes: say ye, Stand fast, and prepare thee; for the sword shall devour round about thee. 15. Why are thy valiant men swept away? they stood not, because the LORD did drive them. 16. He made many to fall, yea, one fell upon another; and they said, Arise, and let us go again to our own people, and to the land of our nativity, from the oppressing sword. 17. They did cry there, Pharaoh king of Egypt *is but* a noise; he hath passed the time appointed. 18. *As I live*, saith the King, whose name *is* The LORD of hosts, Surely as Tabor *is* among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, *so* shall he come. 19. O thou daughter dwelling in Egypt, furnish thyself to go into captivity: for Noph shall be waste and desolate without an inhabitant. 20. Egypt *is like* a very fair heifer, *but* destruction cometh; it cometh out of the north. 21. Also her hired men *are* in the midst of her like fatted bullocks; for they also are turned back, *and* are fled away together: they did not stand, because the day of their calamity was come upon them, *and* the time of their visitation. 22. The voice thereof shall go like a serpent; for they shall march with an army, and come against her with axes, as hewers of wood. 23. They shall cut down her forest, saith the LORD, though it cannot be searched; because they are more than the grasshoppers, and *are* innumerable. 24. The daughter of Egypt shall be confounded; she shall

be delivered into the hand of the people of the north. 25. The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saith, Behold, I will punish the multitude of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with their gods, and their kings; even Pharaoh, and *all* them that trust in him: 26. And I will deliver them into the hand of those that seek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants: and afterwards it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old, saith the LORD. 27. But fear not thou. O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make *him* afraid. 28. Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD; for I *am* with thee: for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee; but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure: yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.

In these verses, we have,

I. Confusion and terror spoken to Egypt. The accomplishment of the prediction in the former part of the chapter disabled the Egyptians to make any attempts upon other nations; for what could they do when their army was routed? But still they remained strong at home, and none of their neighbours durst make any attempts upon them. Though the kings of Egypt came no more *out of their land*, (2 Kings xxiv. 7.) yet they kept safe and easy in their land; and what would they desire more, than peaceably to enjoy their own? One would think all men should be content to do this, and not covet to invade their neighbours. But the measure of Egypt's iniquity is full, and now they shall not long enjoy their own; they that encroached on others shall now be themselves encroached on. The scope of the prophecy here is to show *how the king of Babylon should shortly come, and smite the land of Egypt*, and bring the war into their own bosoms, which they had formerly carried into his borders, *v. 13*. This was fulfilled by the same hand with the former, even Nebuchadrezzar's, but many years after, twenty at least, and, probably, the prediction of it was long after the former prediction, and perhaps much about the same time with that other prediction of the same event which we had, *ch. xliii. 10*.

1. Here is the alarm of war sounded in Egypt, to their great amazement, (*v. 14*.) notice given to the country that the enemy is approaching, *the sword is devouring round about* in the neighbouring countries, and therefore it is time for the Egyptians to put themselves in a posture of defence, to prepare for war, that they may give the enemy a warm reception. This must be proclaimed in all parts of Egypt, particularly in Migdol, Noph, and Tahpanhes, because in these places especially the Jewish refugees, or fugitives rather, had planted themselves, in contempt of God's command; (*ch. xliv. 1*.) and let them hear what a sorry shelter Egypt is likely to be to them.

2. The retreat, hereupon, of the forces of other nations which the Egyptians had in their pay, is here foretold. Some considerable number of those troops, it is probable, were posted upon the frontiers

to guard them, where they were beaten off by the invaders, and put to flight. Then were the *valiant men swept away*, (v. 15.) as with a *sweeping rain*; (it is the word that is used, Prov. xxviii. 3.) they can none of them stand their ground, *because the Lord drives them* from their respective posts; he drives them by his terrors, he drives them by enabling the Chaldeans to drive them. It is not possible that those should fix whom the wrath of God chases. He it was, (v. 16.) that *made many to fall, yea*, when their day is come to fall, the enemy needs not throw them down, they shall *fall upon one another*, every man shall be a stumbling-block to his fellow, to his follower; nay, if God pleases, they shall be made to *fall upon one another, every man's sword shall be against his fellow*. Her hired men, the troops Egypt has in her service, are indeed in the *midst of her like fatted bullocks*, lusty men, able-bodied, and high-spirited, who were likely for action, and to have made their part good against the enemy; but *they are turned back*, their hearts failed them, and, instead of fighting, they are *fled away together*. How could they withstand their fate, when *the day of their calamity was come*, the day in which God will visit them in wrath? Some think they are compared to *fatted bullocks* for their luxury; they had wanted in pleasures, so that they were very unfit for hardships, and therefore *turned back*, and could not stand. In this consternation, (1.) They all made homeward toward their own country; (v. 16.) *They said, "Arise, and let us go again to our own people, where we may be safe from the oppressing sword of the Chaldeans, that bears down all before it."* In times of exigence little confidence is to be put in mercenary troops, that fight purely for pay, and have no interest in theirs whom they fight for. (2.) They exclaimed vehemently against Pharaoh, to whose cowardice or ill conduct, it is probable, their defeat was owing. When he posted them there upon the borders of his country, it is probable that he told them, he would within such a time come himself with a gallant army of his own subjects to support them; but he failed them, and when the enemy advanced, they found they had none to back them, so that they were perfectly abandoned to the fury of the invaders; no marvel then that they quitted their post, and deserted the service, crying out, *Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise*, (v. 17.) he can hector, and talk big of the mighty things he would do, but that is all; he brings nothing to pass, all his promises to those in alliance with him, or that are employed for him, vanish into smoke; he brings not the succours he engaged to bring, or not till it is too late; *He has passed the time appointed*, he did not keep his word, nor keep his day, and therefore they bid him farewell, they will never serve under him any more. Note, Those that make most noise in any business, are frequently *but a noise*. Great talkers are little doers.

3. The formidable power of the Chaldean army is here described as bearing down all before it. *The King of kings, whose name is the Lord of hosts*, and before whom the mightiest kings on earth, though gods to us, are but as grasshoppers, he hath said it, he hath sworn it, *As I live, saith this King, as Tabor overtops the mountains, and Carmel overlooks the sea, so shall the king of Babylon overpower all the force of Egypt*; such a command shall he have, such a sway shall he bear! v. 18. He and his *army shall come against Egypt with axes, as hewers of wood*, (v. 22.) and the Egyptians shall be no more able to resist them than the tree is to resist the man that comes with an axe to cut it down: so that Egypt shall be felled as a *forest is by the hewers of wood*, which (if they be many of them, and those well provided with instruments for the purpose)

will be done in a little time. Egypt is very populous, full of towns and cities, like a *forest*, the trees of which *cannot be searched* or numbered, and very rich, full of hid treasures, many of which will escape the searching eye of the Chaldean soldiers; but they shall make a great spoil in the country, for *they are more than the locusts*, that come in vast swarms, and overrun a country, devouring every green thing; (Joel i. 6, 7.) so shall the Chaldeans do, for *they are innumerable*. Note, *The Lord of hosts* hath numberless hosts at his command.

4. The desolation of Egypt hereby is foretold, and the waste that should be made of that rich country. *Egypt is now like a very fair heifer*, or calf, (v. 20.) fat and shining, and not accustomed to the yoke of subjection; wanton as a heifer that is well fed, and very sportful. Some think here is an allusion to Apis, the bull or calf which the Egyptians worshipped, from whom the children of Israel learned to *worship the golden calf*. Egypt is as fair as a goddess, and adores herself, *but destruction comes; cutting up comes*, so some read it; *it comes out of the north*; thence the Chaldean soldiers shall come, as so many butchers or sacrificers, to kill and cut up this *fair heifer*. (1.) The Egyptians shall be brought down, shall be tamed, and their tune changed. *The daughters of Egypt shall be confounded*, (v. 24.) shall be filled with astonishment; *their voice shall go like a serpent*, it shall be very low and submissive, they shall not low like a *fair heifer*, that makes a great noise, but hiss out of their holes *like serpents*. They shall not dare to make loud complaints of the cruelty of the conquerors, but vent their griefs in silent murmurs. They shall not now, as they used to do, answer roughly, but, with *the poor, use intreaties*, and beg for their lives. (2.) They shall be carried away prisoners into their enemy's land; (v. 19.) *"O thou daughter, dwelling securely and delicately in Egypt, that fruitful, pleasant country, do not think this will last always, but furnish thyself to go into captivity; instead of rich clothes, which will but tempt the enemy to strip thee, get plain and warm clothes; instead of fine shoes, provide strong ones; and inure thyself to hardship, that thou mayest bear it the better."* Note, It concerns us, among all our preparations, to prepare for trouble; we provide for the entertainment of our friends, let us not neglect to provide for the entertainment of our enemies, nor among all our furniture omit furniture for captivity. The Egyptians must prepare to flee, for their cities shall be evacuated; Noph particularly *shall be desolate without an inhabitant*, so general shall the slaughter and the captivity be. There are some penalties which, we say, the king and the multitude are exempted from, but here even these are obnoxious; *The multitude of No shall be punished*; it is called *populous No*, Nah. iii. 8. *Though hand join in hand*, yet they shall not escape; nor can any think to go off in the crowd. Be they ever so many, they shall find God will be too many for them. Their kings and all their petty princes shall fall; and their gods too, (ch. xliii. 12, 13.) their idols and their great men. Those which they call their *tutelar deities*, shall be no protection to them. Pharaoh shall be brought down, and *all those that trust in him*; (v. 25.) particularly the Jews that came to sojourn in his country, trusting in him rather than in God. All these shall be *delivered into the hands of the northern nations*, (v. 24.) into the hand not only of Nebuchadnezzar, that mighty potentate, but *into the hands of his servants*, according to the curse on Ham's posterity, of which the Egyptians were, that they should be the *servants of servants*; these seek their lives, and into their hands they shall be delivered.

5. An intimation is given that in process of time Egypt shall recover itself again; (v. 26.) *After-*

ward it shall be inhabited, shall be peopled again, whereas by this destruction it was almost depopled. Ezekiel foretells that this should be at the end of 40 years, Ezek. xxix. 13. See what changes the nations of the earth are subject to, how they are emptied and increased again; and let not nations that prosper be secure, nor those that for the present are in thralldom despair.

11. Comfort and peace are here spoken to the Israel of God, v. 27, 28. Some understand it of those whom the king of Egypt had carried into captivity with Jehoahaz, but we read not of any that were carried away captives with him; it may therefore rather refer to the captives of Babylon, whom God had mercy in store for, or, more generally to all the people of God, designed for their encouragement in the most difficult times, when the judgments of God are abroad among the nations. We had these words of comfort before, *ch. xxx. 10, 11.* 1. Let the wicked of the earth tremble, they have cause for it; *but fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel;* and again, *Fear thou not, O Jacob.* God would not have his people to be a timorous people. 2. The wicked of the earth shall be put away like dross, not to be looked after any more; but God's people, in order to their being saved, shall be found out and gathered, though they be afar off, shall be redeemed, though they be held fast in captivity, and shall return. 3. The wicked is like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, they flee when none pursues; but Jacob, being at home in God, shall be at rest, and at ease, and none shall make him afraid; for what time he is afraid, he has a God to trust to. 4. The wicked, God beholds afar off; but, wherever thou art, O Jacob, I am with thee, a very present Help. 5. A full end shall be made of the nations that oppressed God's Israel, as Egypt and Babylon; but mercy shall be kept in store for the Israel of God: they shall be corrected, but not cast off, the correction shall be in measure, in respect of degree and continuance. Nations have their periods, the Jewish nation itself is come to an end, as a nation; but the gospel-church, God's spiritual Israel, still continues, and will to the end of time; in that this promise is to have its full accomplishment, that though God correct it, he will never make a full end of it.

CHAP. XLVII.

This chapter reads the Philistines their doom, as the former read the Egyptians theirs; and by the same hand, that of Nebuchadrezzar. It is short, but terrible; and Tyre and Zidon, though they lay at some distance from them, come in sharers with them, in the destruction here threatened. 1. It is foretold that the forces of the northern crowns should come upon them, to their great terror, v. 1. 5. 11. That the war should continue long, and their endeavours to put an end to it should be in vain, v. 6, 7.

1. **T**HE word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Philistines, before that Pharaoh smote Gaza. 2. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein; the city, and them that dwell therein: then the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl. 3. At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong horses, at the rushing of his chariots, and at the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers shall not look back to their children for feebleness of hands; 4.

Because of the day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, and to cut off from Tyrus and Zidon every helper that remaineth; for the LORD will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of Caphthor. 5. Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off with the remnant of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thyself! 6. O thou sword of the LORD, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still. 7. How can it be quiet, seeing the LORD hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea-shore? there hath he appointed it.

As the Egyptians had often proved false friends, so the Philistines had always been sworn enemies, to the Israel of God, and the more dangerous and vexatious for their being such near neighbours to them. They were considerably humbled in David's time, but, it seems, they had got head again, and were a considerable people till Nebuchadrezzar cut them off with their neighbours, which is the event here foretold. The date of this prophecy is observable; it was before Pharaoh smote Gaza: when this blow was given to Gaza by the king of Egypt is not certain, whether in his expedition against Carchemish, or in his return thence, after he had slain Josiah, or when he afterward came with design to relieve Jerusalem; but this is mentioned here, to show that this word of the Lord came to Jeremiah against the Philistines, when they were in their full strength and lustre, themselves and their cities in good condition, in no peril from any adversary or evil occurrence, when no disturbance of their repose was foreseen by any human probabilities; then Jeremiah foretold their ruin, which Pharaoh's smiting Gaza soon after would be but an earnest of, and, as it were, the beginnings of sorrow to that country. It is here foretold,

1. That a foreign enemy and a very formidable one shall be brought upon them: *Waters rise up out of the north, v. 2.* Waters sometimes signify multitudes of people and nations, (Rev. xvii. 15.) sometimes great and threatening calamities, (Ps. lxxix. 1.) these here signify both. They rise out of the north, whence fair weather, and the wind that drives away rain, are said to come; but now a terrible storm comes out of that cold climate. The Chaldean army shall overflow the land like a deluge. Probably, this happened before the destruction of Jerusalem, for it should seem that in Gedaliah's time, which was just after, the army of the Chaldeans was quite withdrawn out of those parts. The country of the Philistines was but of small extent, so that it would soon be overwhelmed by so vast an army.

2. That they shall all be in a consternation upon it: the men shall have no heart to fight, but shall sit down and cry like children; *all the inhabitants of the land shall howl*, so that nothing but lamentation shall be heard in all places. The occasion of the fright is elegantly described, v. 3. Before it comes to killing and slaying, the very stamping of the horses and rattling of the chariots, when the enemy makes his approach, shall strike a terror upon the people, to that degree, that parents in their fright shall seem void of natural affection, *for they shall not look back to their children*, to provide for their safety, or so much as to see what becomes of them. *Their hands shall be so feeble*, that they shall despair of carrying them off with them, and therefore they shall not care for seeing them, but leave them to take their lot; or they shall be in such

a consternation, that they shall quite forget even those pieces of themselves. Let none be over-fond of their children, nor dote upon them, since such distress may come, that they may either wish they had none, or forget that they have, and have no heart to look upon them.

3. That the country of the Philistines shall be spoiled and laid waste, and the other countries adjoining to them and in alliance with them. It is a day to *spoil the Philistines, for the Lord will spoil them*, v. 4. Note, Those whom God will spoil must needs be spoiled; for, *if God be against them, who can be for them?* Tyre and Zidon were strong and wealthy cities, and they used to help the Philistines in a strait, but now they shall themselves be involved in the common ruin, and God will cut off from them every *helper that remains*. Note, Those that trust to help from creatures, will find it cut off when they most need it, and will thereby be put into the utmost confusion. Who the *remnant of the country of Caphtor* were, is uncertain, but we find that the Caphtorim were near akin to the Philistine, (Gen. x. 14.) and, probably, when their own country was destroyed, such as remained came and settled with their kinsmen the Philistines, and were now spoiled with them. Some particular places are here named, *Gaza* and *Ashkelon*; (v. 5.) *boldness is come upon them*, the invaders have stripped them of all their ornaments, or, they have made themselves bald in token of extreme grief, and they are *cut off*, with the other cities that were in the plain or valley about them. The products of their fruitful valleys shall be *spoiled*, and made a prey of, by the conquerors.

4. That these calamities should continue long. The prophet, in the foresight of this, with his usual tenderness, asks them, first, (v. 5.) *How long will ye cut yourselves*, as men in extreme sorrow and anguish do? Oh how tedious will the calamity be! not only cutting, but long cutting; but he turns from the effect to the cause; *They cut themselves*, for the sword of the Lord cuts them. And therefore, (1.) He bespeaks that to be still; (v. 6.) *O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet?* He begs it would *put up itself into the scabbard*, would devour no more flesh, drink no more blood. This expresses the prophet's earnest desire to see an end of the war, looking with compassion, as became a man, even upon the Philistines themselves, when their country was made desolate by the sword. Note, War is the *sword of the Lord*, with it he punishes the crimes of his enemies, and pleads the cause of his own people. When war is once begun, it often lasts long; the sword, once drawn, does not quickly find the way into the scabbard again; nay, some, when they draw the sword, will throw away the scabbard, for they *delight in war*. So deplorable are the desolations of war, that the blessings of peace cannot but be very desirable. O that *swords might be beaten into ploughshares!* (2.) Yet he gives a satisfactory account of the continuance of the war, and stops the mouth of his own complaint; (v. 7.) *How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against such and such places, particularly specified in its commission? There hath he appointed it.* Note, [1.] The sword of war has its charge from the Lord of hosts; every bullet has its charge; you call them blind bullets, but they are directed by an all-seeing God: the war itself has its charge; he saith to it, *Go, and it goes; Come, and it comes; Do this, and it does it*; for he is Commander in chief. [2.] When the sword is drawn, we cannot expect it should be sheathed till it has fulfilled its charge. As the word of God, so his rod and his sword shall accomplish that for which he sends them.

CHAP. XLVIII.

Moab is next set to the bar before Jeremiah the prophet, whom God had constituted judge over nations and kingdoms, from his mouth to receive its doom. Isaiah's predictions concerning Moab had had their accomplishment, (we had the predictions, Isa. xv, xvi. and the like, Amos ii. 1.) and they were fulfilled when the Assyrians, under Salmanassar, invaded and distressed Moab. But this is a prophecy of the desolations of Moab by the Chaldeans, which were accomplished under Nebuzaradan, about five years after he had destroyed Jerusalem. Here is, I. The destruction foretold, that it should be great and general, should extend itself to all parts of the country, (v. 1. . 6, 8.) and again, v. 21. . 25, 34. That spoilers should come upon them, and force some to flee, (v. 9.) should carry many into captivity; (v. 12, 46.) that the enemy should come shortly, (v. 16.) come swiftly, and surprise them; (v. 40, 41.) that he should make thorough work, (v. 10.) and lay the country quite waste, though it was very strong; (v. 14, 15.) that there should be no escaping, (v. 42, 45.) that this should force them to quit their idols, (v. 13, 35.) and put an end to all their joy; (v. 33, 34.) that their neighbours shall lament them, (v. 17. . 19.) and the prophet himself does, v. 31, 36, &c. II. The causes of this destruction assigned; it was sin that brought this ruin upon them, their pride, and security, and carnal confidence, (v. 7, 11, 14, 29.) and their contempt of, and enmity to, God and his people, v. 26, 27, 30. III. A promise of the restoration of Moab, v. 47.

1. **A** GAINST Moab thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Wo unto Nebo! for it is spoiled; Kiriathaim is confounded and taken; Misgab is confounded and dismayed. 2. *There shall be no more praise of Moab*: in Heshbon they have devised evil against it; come, and let us cut it off from *being* a nation: also thou shalt be cut down, O Madmen; the sword shall pursue thee. 3. A voice of crying *shall be* from Horonaim, spoiling and great destruction. 4. Moab is destroyed; her little ones have caused a cry to be heard. 5. For in the going up of Luhith continual weeping shall go up; for in the going down of Horonaim the enemies have heard a cry of destruction. 6. Flee, save your lives, and be like the heath in the wilderness. 7. For because thou hast trusted in thy works, and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken; and Chemosh shall go forth into captivity, *with* his priests and his princes together. 8. And the spoiler shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape; the valley also shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed, as the LORD hath spoken. 9. Give wings unto Moab, that it may flee and get away: for the cities thereof shall be desolate, without any to dwell therein. 10. Cursed *be* he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully, and cursed *be* he that keepeth back his sword from blood. 11. Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. 12. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the

LORD, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles. 13. And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Beth-el their confidence.

We may observe, in these verses,

1. The Author of Moab's destruction; it is *the Lord of hosts*, that has armies, all armies, at his command, and the God of Israel, (v. 1.) who will herein plead the cause of his Israel against a people that have always been vexatious to them, and will punish them now for the injuries done to Israel of old, though Israel was forbidden to meddle with them; (Deut. ii. 9.) therefore the destruction of Moab is called *the work of the Lord*, (v. 10.) for it is he that pleads for Israel; and his work will exactly agree with his word, v. 8.

2. The instruments of it; *Spoilers shall come*, (v. 8.) shall come with a sword, a sword that shall *pursue them*, v. 2. *I will send unto him wanderers*, such as come from afar, as if they were vagrants, or had missed their way, but they shall *cause him to wander*; they seem as wanderers themselves, but they shall make the Moabites to be really wanderers, some to flee, and others to be carried into captivity. These destroyers stir up themselves to do execution; they *have devised evil against Heshbon*, one of the principal cities of Moab, and they aim at no less than the ruin of the kingdom, *Come, and let us cut it off from being a nation*; (v. 2.) nothing less will serve the turn of the invaders, they come not to plunder it, but to ruin it. The prophet, in God's name, engages them to make thorough work of it; (v. 10.) *Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully*, this bloody work, this destroying work; though it goes against the grain with men of compassion, yet it is *the work of the Lord*, and must not be done by the halves. The Chaldeans have it in charge, by a secret instinct, (says Mr. Gataker,) to destroy the Moabites, and therefore they must not spare, must not, out of foolish pity, *keep back their sword from blood*, they would thereby bring a sword, and a curse with it, upon themselves, as Saul did by sparing the Amalekites; and Ahab by letting Benhadad go; *Thy life shall go for his life*. To this work is applied that general rule given to all that are employed in any service for God. *Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully* or negligently, that pretends to do it, but does it not to purpose, makes a show of serving God's glory, but is really serving his own ends, and carries on the work of the Lord no further than will suit his own purposes; or that is slothful in business for God, and takes neither care nor pains to do it as it should be done, Mat. i. 14. Let not such deceive themselves, for God will not thus be mocked.

3. The woful instances and effects of this destruction. The cities shall be laid in ruins, they shall be *spoiled*, (v. 1.) and cut down, (v. 2.) they shall be *desolate*, (v. 9.) *without any to dwell therein*; there shall be no houses to dwell in, or no people to dwell in them, or no safety and ease to those that would dwell in them. *Every city shall be spoiled, and no city shall escape*. The strongest city shall not be able to secure itself against the enemies' power, nor shall the finest city be able to recommend itself to the enemies' pity and favour. The country also shall be wasted, the *valley shall perish*, and the *plain be destroyed*, v. 8. The corn and the flocks, which used to cover the plains, and make the valley rejoice, shall all be destroyed, eaten

up, trodden down, or carried off. The most sacred persons shall not escape, the *priests and princes shall go together into captivity*. Nay, Chemosh, the god they worship, who, they hope, will protect them, shall share with them in the ruin, his temples shall be laid in ashes, and his image carried away with the rest of the spoil. Now the consequence of all this will be, (1.) Great shame and confusion; *Kirjathaim is confounded*, and Misgah is so. They shall be ashamed of the mighty boasts they have sometimes made of their cities. *There shall be no more vaunting in Moab concerning Heshbon*; (so it might be read, v. 2.) they shall no more boast of the strength of that city, when the evil which is designed against it is brought upon it. Nor shall they any more boast of their gods; (v. 13.) they *shall be ashamed of Chemosh*, ashamed of all the prayers they made to, and all the confidence they put in, that dunghill deity: as *Israel was ashamed of Beth-el*, of the golden calf they had at Beth-el, which they confided in as their protector, but were deceived in, for it was not able to save them from the Assyrians; nor shall Chemosh be able to save the Moabites from the Chaldeans. Note, Those that will not be convinced and made ashamed of the folly of their idolatry by the word of God, shall be convinced and made ashamed of it by the judgments of God, when they shall find by woful experience the utter inability of the gods they have served to do them any service. (2.) There will be great sorrow; there is a *voice of crying heard*, (v. 3.) and the cry is nothing but *spoiling and great destruction*; Alas! alas! *Moab is destroyed*, v. 4. The great ones having quitted the cities to shift for their own safety, even the *little ones have caused a cry to be heard*, the meaner sort of people, or the little children, the innocent, harmless ones, whose cries at such a time are the most piteous. Go up to the hills, go down to the valley, and you meet with *continual weeping*, weeping, with weeping all are in tears, you meet none with dry eyes. Even the enemies have heard the cry, from whom it had been policy to conceal it, for they will be animated and encouraged by it; but it is so great, that it cannot be hid. (3.) There will be great hurry; they will cry to one another, "Away, away, *flee, save your lives*, (v. 6.) shift for your own safety with all imaginable speed, though you escape as bare and naked as the *heath*, or grig, or dry shrub, *in the wilderness*; think not of carrying away any thing you have, for it may cost you your life to attempt it, Matth. xxiv. 16.—18. Take shelter, though it be in a barren wilderness, that you may have your lives for a prey. The danger will come suddenly and swiftly; and therefore *give wings unto Moab*, (v. 9.) that would be the greatest kindness you could do them, that is it that they will call for, *O that we had wings like a dove!* for unless they have wings, and can fly, there will be no escaping."

4. The sins for which God will now reckon with Moab, and which justify God in these severe proceedings against them.

(1.) It is because they have been secure, and have trusted in their wealth and strength, *in their works*, and *in their treasures*, v. 7. They had taken a great deal of pains to fortify their cities, and make large works about them, and to fill their exchequer and private coffers; so that they thought themselves in as good a posture for war as any people could be, and that none durst invade them, and therefore set danger at defiance; they trusted in the *abundance of their riches*, and *strengthened themselves in their wickedness*, Ps. lii. 7. Now, for this reason, that they may have a sensible conviction of the vanity and folly of their carnal confidences, God will send an enemy that shall master their works, and rife

their treasures. Note, We forfeit the comfort of that creature, which we repose that confidence in that should be reposed in God only. The reed will break that is leaned upon.

(2.) It is because they have not made a right improvement of the days of their peace and prosperity, v. 11. [1.] They had been long undisturbed; *Moab hath been at ease from his youth.* It was an ancient kingdom before Israel was, and had enjoyed great tranquillity, though a small country, and surrounded with potent neighbours. God's Israel were afflicted from their youth, (Ps. cxxix. 1, 2.) but *Moab hath been at ease from his youth.* He has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, has not known any troublesome, weakening changes, but is as wine kept on the lees, and not racked or drawn off, by which it retains its strength and body. He has not been unsettled, nor any way made uneasy; he has not gone into captivity, as Israel have often done, and yet Moab is a wicked, idolatrous nation, and one of the confederates against God's hidden ones, Ps. lxxxiii. 6. Note, There are many that persist in unpented iniquity, and yet enjoy uninterrupted prosperity. [2.] They had been as long corrupt and unreformed; *He has settled on his lees,* he has been secure and sensual in his prosperity, has rested in it, and fetched all the strength and life of the soul from it, as the wine from the lees; his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed; he is still the same, as bad as ever he was. Note, While bad people are as happy as they used to be in the world, it is no marvel if they are as bad as they used to be. They have no changes of their peace and prosperity, *therefore they fear not God,* their hearts and lives are unchanged, Ps. lv. 19.

14. How say ye, We are mighty and strong men for the war? 15. Moab is spoiled, and gone up out of her cities, and his chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, saith the King, whose name is The LORD of hosts. 16. The calamity of Moab is near to come, and his affliction hasteth fast. 17. All ye that are about him, bemoan him; and all ye that know his name, say, How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod! 18. Thou daughter that dost inhabit Dibon, come down from thy glory, and sit in thirst; for the spoiler of Moab shall come upon thee, and he shall destroy thy strong holds. 19. O inhabitant of Aroer, stand by the way, and espy; ask him that fleeth, and her that escapeth, and say, What is done? 20. Moab is confounded; for it is broken down: howl and cry; tell ye it in Arnon, that Moab is spoiled. 21. And judgment is come upon the plain country; upon Holon, and upon Jahazah, and upon Mephaath. 22. And upon Dibon, and upon Nebo, and upon Beth-diblathaim. 23. And upon Kiriathaim, and upon Beth-gamul, and upon Beth-meon. 24. And upon Kerioth, and upon Bozrah, and upon all the cities of the land of Moab, far or near. 25. The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, saith the LORD. 26. Make ye him drunken; for he magnified himself against

the LORD: Moab also shall wallow in his vomit, and he also shall be in derision. 27. For was not Israel a derision unto thee! was he found among thieves! for since thou spakest of him, thou skippedst for joy. 28. O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities, and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth. 29. We have heard the pride of Moab, (he is exceeding proud,) his loftiness, and his arrogance, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart. 30. I know his wrath, saith the LORD: but it shall not be so; his lies shall not so effect it. 31. Therefore will I howl for Moab, and I will cry out for all Moab; my heart shall mourn for the men of Kir-heres. 32. O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee with the weeping of Jazer; thy plants are gone over the sea, they reach even to the sea of Jazer: the spoiler is fallen upon thy summer-fruits, and upon thy vintage. 33. And joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab; and I have caused wine to fail from the wine-presses: none shall tread with shouting; their shouting shall be no shouting. 34. From the cry of Heshbon even unto Elealeh, and even unto Jahaz, have they uttered their voice, from Zoar even unto Horonaim, as a heifer of three years old; for the waters also of Nimrim shall be desolate. 35. Moreover, I will cause to cease in Moab, saith the LORD, him that offereth in the high places, and him that burneth incense to his gods. 36. Therefore my heart shall sound for Moab like pipes, and my heart shall sound like pipes for the men of Kir-heres: because the riches that he hath gotten is perished. 37. For every head shall be bald, and every beard clipt: upon all the hands shall be cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth. 38. There shall be lamentation generally upon all the house-tops of Moab, and in the streets thereof: for I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein is no pleasure, saith the LORD. 39. They shall howl, saying, How is it broken down! how hath Moab turned the back with shame! so shall Moab be a derision and a dismaying to all them about him. 40. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab. 41. Kerioth is taken, and the strong holds are surprised, and the mighty men's hearts in Moab at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs. 42. And Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he hath magnified himself against the LORD. 43. Fear, and the pit, and the snare, shall

be upon thee, O inhabitant of Moab, saith the LORD. 44. He that fleeth from the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that getteth up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for I will bring upon it, *even* upon Moab, the year of their visitation, saith the LORD. 45. They that fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon, because of the force: but a fire shall come forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon, and shall devour the corner of Moab, and the crown of the head of the tumultuous ones. 46. Wo be unto thee, O Moab! the people of Chemosh perisheth: for thy sons are taken captives, and thy daughters captives. 47. Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the LORD. Thus far is the judgment of Moab.

The destruction is here further prophesied of very largely, and with a great copiousness and variety of expression, and very pathetically, and in moving language, designed not only to awaken them by a national repentance and reformation to prevent the trouble, or by a personal repentance and reformation to prepare for it, but to affect us with the calamitous state of human life, which is liable to such lamentable occurrences; and with the power of God's anger and the terror of his judgments, when he comes forth to contend with a provoking people. In reading this long roll of threatenings, and meditating the terror of them, it will be of more use to us to keep this in our eye, and to get our hearts thereby possessed with a holy awe of God and of his wrath, than to inquire critically into all the lively figures and metaphors here used.

I. It is a surprising destruction, and very sudden, that is here threatened. They were very secure, thought themselves *strong for war*, and able to deal with the most powerful enemy; (v. 14.) and yet the calamity is near, and he is not able to keep it off, nor so much as to keep the enemy long in parley, for the *affliction hastens fast*, (v. 16.) and will soon come to a crisis. The enemy shall *fly as an eagle*, so swiftly, so strongly shall he come, (v. 40.) as an eagle flies upon his prey, and he shall *spread his wings*, the wings of his army, over Moab; he shall surround it, that none may escape. *The strong holds* of Moab are taken by *surprise*, (v. 41.) so that all their strength stood them in no stead; and this made *the hearts even of their mighty men to fail*, for they had not time to recollect the considerations that might have animated them. It requires a more than ordinary degree of courage not to be *afraid of sudden fear*.

II. It is an utter destruction, and such as lays Moab all in ruins. *Moab is spoiled*, (v. 15.) quite spoiled, is *confounded and broken down*; (v. 20.) their cities are laid in ashes, or seized by the enemy, so that they are forced to quit them, v. 15. Divers cities are here named, upon which judgment is come, and the list concludes with an *et cetera*. What occasion was there for him to mention more particulars, when it comes *upon all the cities of Moab* in general, *far and near*? v. 21.—24. Note, When iniquity is universal, we have reason to expect that calamity should be so too. The kingdom is deprived of its dignity and authority; *The horn of Moab is cut off*, the horn of its strength and power, both offensive and defensive; *his arm is broken*, that he can neither give a blow, nor save a blow, v. 25. Is the youth of the kingdom the strength and beauty of it?

His chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, v. 15. They went down to the battle, promising themselves that they should return victorious; but God told them that they went *down to the slaughter*; so sure are they to fall against whom God fights! In a word, *Moab shall be destroyed from being a people*, v. 42. Those that are enemies to God's people will soon be made no people.

III. It is a lamentable destruction, it will be just matter of mourning, and will turn joy into heaviness.

1. The prophet that foretells it does himself lament it, and mourns at the very foresight of it, from a principle of compassion to his fellow-creatures, and concern for human nature. The prophet will himself *howl for Moab*, his very heart shall *mourn for them*; (v. 31.) he will *weep for the vine of Sibmah*, (v. 32.) his heart shall *sound like pipes for Moab*, v. 36. Though the destruction of Moab would prove him a true prophet, yet he could not think of it without trouble. The ruin of sinners is no pleasure to God, and therefore should be a pair to us; even those that give warning of it should lay it to heart. These passages, and many others in this chapter, are much the same with what Isaiah had used in his prophecies against Moab; (Isa. xv. 16.) for though there was a long distance of time between that prophecy and this, yet they were both dictated by one and the same Spirit; and it becomes God's prophets to speak the language of those that went before them. It is no plagiarism sometimes to make use of old expressions, provided it be with new affections and applications.

2. The Moabites themselves shall lament; it will be the greatest mortification and grief imaginable to them. Those that sat in *glory*, in the midst of wealth and mirth, and all manner of pleasure, shall *sit in thirst*, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water, no comfort is, v. 18. It is time for them to *sit in thirst*, and inure themselves to hardship, when *the spoiler is come*, who will strip them of all, and empty them. The Moabites in the remote corners of the country, that are furthest from the danger, will be inquisitive how the matter goes, what news from the army, will ask every one *that escapes*, *What is done?* v. 19. And when they are told that all is gone, that the invader is the conqueror, they will *howl and cry*, in bitterness and anguish of spirit, (v. 20.) they will abandon themselves to solitude, to lament the desolations of their country, they will *leave the cities* that used to be full of mirth, and *dwell in the rock*, where they may have their fill of melancholy: they shall no more be singing birds, but mourning birds, *like the dove*, (v. 28.) *the doves of the valleys*, Ezek. vii. 16. Let those that give themselves up to mirth know that God can soon change their note. Their sorrow shall be so very extreme, that they shall make themselves *bald*, and *cut themselves*, (v. 37.) which were expressions of a desperate grief, such as tempted men to be even their own destroyers. *Job*, indeed, *rent his mantle, and shaved his head*, but he did not cut himself. When the flood of passion rises ever so high, wisdom and grace must set bounds to it, set banks to it, to restrain it from such barbarities. The sorrow shall be universal; (v. 38.) *There shall be a general lamentation upon all the house-tops of Moab*, where they worshipped their idols, to whom they shall in vain bemoan themselves, and in all the streets, where they conversed with one another, for they shall be free in communicating their griefs and fears, and in propagating them; for they see all lost; *"I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein is no pleasure"*, which shall not be regarded, and cannot be pieced again. That which Moab used to rejoice in, was, their pleasant fruits, and the abundance of their rich wines. The delights of sense were all

the matter of their joy. Take away these, destroy their gardens and vineyards, and you make *all their mirth to cease*, Hos. ii. 11, 12. There is great weeping when their plants are transplanted, *are gone over the sea*, (v. 32.) are carried into other countries, to be planted there. *The spoiler is fallen upon thy summer-fruits, and upon thy vintage*, and that is it that makes *the cry of Heshbon* to reach even to Elealeh, v. 34. *Take joy and gladness from the plentiful field, and you take it from the land of Moab*, v. 33. *If the wine fail from the wine-presses*, that used to be trodden with acclamations of joy, all their gladness is cut off. *Take away that shouting, and there shall be no shouting*. Note, They who make the delights of sense their chief joy, their exceeding joy, since these are things they may be easily deprived of in a little time, subject themselves to the tyranny of the greatest grief; whereas they who rejoice in God may do that even when *the fig-tree doth not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine*. These Moabites lost not only their wine, but their water too, even *the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate*, (v. 34.) and therefore their grief grew extravagantly loud and noisy, and their lamentations were heard in all places like the lowing of a *heifer of three years old*. The expressions here are borrowed from Isa. xv. 5, 6.

3. All their neighbours are called to mourn with them, and to condole with them on their ruin; (v. 17.) *All ye that are about him, bemoan him*. Let him have that allay to his grief, let him see himself pitied by the adjoining countries. Nay, let those at a distance, who do but *know his name*, and have heard of his reputation, take notice of his fall, and say, *How is the strong staff broken*, whose strength was the terror of its enemies, *and the beautiful rod*, whose beauty was the pride of its friends! Let the nations take notice of this, and receive instruction. Let none be puffed up with, or put confidence in, their strength or beauty, for neither will be a security against the judgments of God.

IV. It is a shameful destruction, and such as shall expose them to contempt; *Moab is made drunk*, (v. 26.) and he that is made drunk, is made vile, *he shall wallow in his vomit*, and become an odious spectacle, *and shall justly be in derision*. Let the Moabites be intoxicated with the cup of God's wrath, till they stagger and fall, and be brought to *their wits' end*, and make themselves ridiculous by the wildness not only of their passions but of their counsels. And again, (v. 39.) *Moab shall be a derision and a dismaying to all about him*; they shall laugh at the fall of the pomp and power he was so proud of. Note, They that are haughty are preparing reproach and ignominy for themselves.

V. It is the destruction of that which is dear to them; not only of their summer-fruits, and their vintage, but of their wealth; (v. 36.) *The riches that he has gotten are perished*; though he thought he had laid them up very safe, and promised himself a long enjoyment of them, yet they are gone. Note, The money that is hoarded in the chest, is as liable to perishing as the summer-fruits that lie exposed in the open fields. Riches are shedding things, and, like dust as they are, slip through our fingers then when we are in most care to hold them fast, and gripe them hard. Yet this is not the worst; even those whose religion was false and foolish were fond of it above any thing, and, such as it was, would not put with it; and therefore, though it was really a promise, yet to them it was a threatening, (v. 35.) *that God will cause to cease him that offers in the high places*, for the high places shall be destroyed, and the fields of offerings shall be laid waste, and the priests themselves, *who burnt incense to their gods*, shall be slain, or carried into captivity, v. 7.

Note, It is only the true religion, and the worship and service of the true God, that will stand us in stead in a day of trouble.

VI. It is a just and righteous destruction, and that which they have deserved, and brought upon themselves, by sin.

1. The sin which they had been most notoriously guilty of, and for which God now reckoned with them, was pride. It is mentioned six times, v. 29. *We have all heard of the pride of Moab*; his neighbours took notice of it, it has testified to his face, as Israel's did, *he is exceeding proud*, and grows worse and worse. Observe *his loftiness, his arrogancy, his pride, his haughtiness*; the multiplying of words to the same purport, intimates in how many instances he discovered his pride, and how offensive it was both to God and man. It was charged upon them, Isa. xvi. 6. but here it is expressed more largely than there. Since then, they had been under humbling providences, and yet were unhumiliated; nay, they grew more arrogant and haughty, which plainly marked them for that utter destruction of which pride is the forerunner. Two instances are here given of the pride of Moab: (1.) He had conducted himself insolently toward God. He must be brought down with shame, (v. 26.) for *he has magnified himself against the Lord*; and again, (v. 42.) *he shall be destroyed from being a people*, for this very reason; the Moabites preferred Chemosh before Jehovah, and thought themselves a match for the God of Israel, whom they set at defiance. (2.) He had conducted himself scornfully toward Israel, particularly in their late troubles; therefore Moab shall fall into the same troubles, into the same hands, and be a derision, for Israel was a *derision to him*, v. 26, 27. The generality of the Moabites, when they heard of the calamities and desolation of their neighbours the Jews, instead of lamenting them, rejoiced in them as if they had been *thieves* taken in the act of robbing; as often as they spake of them, *they skipped for joy*. Many, in such a case, entertained in their minds a secret pleasure at the fall of those they had a dislike to, who yet have so much discretion as to conceal it, it is so invidious a thing; but the Moabites industriously proclaimed their joy, and avowed the enmity they had to Israel, triumphing over every Israelite they met with in distress, and laughing at him; which was as inhuman as it was impious, and an impudent affront both to man, whose nature they were of, and to God, whose name they were called by. Note, Those that deride others in distress will justly and certainly, sooner or later, come into distress themselves, and be had in derision. Those that are *glad at calamities*, especially the calamities of God's church, *shall not long go unpunished*.

2. Beside this, they had been guilty of malice against God's people, and treachery in their dealings with them, v. 30. They made a jest of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, and pretended, when they laughed at them, that it was but in sport, and to make themselves merry; but, says God, *I know his wrath*, I know it comes from the old enmity he has to the seed of Abraham, and the worshippers of the true God. *I know* he thinks these calamities of the Jewish nation will end in their utter extirpation. He now tells the Chaldeans what bad people the Jews are, and irritates them against them; *but it shall not be so* as he expects; *his lies shall not so effect it*. The nation, whose fall they triumph in, shall recover itself." Some read it, *I know his rage*. *Is it not so?* (Is he not very furious against the people of God?) *And his lies I know also*. *Do they not do so?* Do they not belie them? Note, All the fury and all the falsehood of

the church's enemies are perfectly known to God, whatever the pretences are with which they think to cover them, Isa. xxxvii. 28.

VII. It is a complicated destruction, and by one instance after another will at length be completed; for those that make their escape from one judgment, shall perish by another; *Fear, and the pit, and the snare, shall be upon them*, v. 43. There shall be fear to drive them into the pit, and a snare to hold them fast in it, when they are in it; so that they shall neither escape from the destruction, nor escape out of it. What was said of sinners in general, (Isa. xxiv. 17, 18.) that they who *flee from the fear shall fall into the pit*, and they who *come up out of the pit, shall be taken in the snare*, is here particularly foretold concerning the sinners of Moab, (v. 44.) for it is the *year of their visitation*, when God comes to reckon with them, and will be *known by the judgments which he executes*, for he is the *King, whose name is the Lord of hosts*; (v. 15.) he is not only the *King*, who has authority to give judgment, but he is the *Lord of hosts*, who is able to do what he has determined. The figurative expressions used, v. 44. are explained in one instance; (v. 45.) *Those that fled out of the villages for fear of the enemy's forces, put themselves under the shadow of Heshbon*, stood there, and supposed they stood safe, as now armies sometimes retire under the cannon of a fortified city, and it is their protection; but here they shall be disappointed, for when they *flee out of the pit they fall into the snare*; Heshbon, which they thought would have sheltered them, devours them, as Moses had foretold long since; (Numb. xxi. 28.) *A fire is gone out of Heshbon, and a flame from the city of Sihon*, and devours those that come from all the corners of Moab, and fastens upon the crown of the head of the tumultuous noisy ones, or of the revellers, or children of noise; not meant of the rude, clamorous multitude, but of the great men, who bluster, and hector, and make a noise; the judgments of God shall light on them. Shall we hear the conclusion of this whole matter? We have it; (v. 46.) *Wo be to thee, O Moab! thou art undone; the people that worship Chemosh perish, and are gone; farewell Moab. The sons and daughters, the hopes of the next generation, are gone into captivity after the Jews, whose calamities they rejoiced in.*

VIII. Yet it is not a perpetual destruction. The chapter concludes with a short promise of their return out of captivity in the latter days. God, who brings them into captivity, will bring again their captivity, v. 47. Thus tenderly does God deal with Moabites, much more with his own people! Even with Moabites he will not contend for ever, nor be always wroth. When Israel returned Moab did; and perhaps the prophecy was intended chiefly for the encouragement of God's people, to hope for that salvation which even Moabites shall share in. Yet it looks further, to gospel-times; the Jews themselves refer it to the days of the Messiah; then the captivity of the Gentiles, under the yoke of sin and Satan, shall be brought back by divine grace, which shall make them free, free indeed. This prophecy concerning Moab is long, but here it ends, it ends comfortably, *Thus far is the judgment of Moab.*

CHAP. XLIX.

The cup of trembling still goes round, and the nations must all drink of it, according to the instructions given to Jeremiah, ch. xxv. 15. This chapter puts it into the hands, I. Of the Ammonites, v. 1. 6. II. Of the Edomites, v. 7. 22. III. Of the Syrians, v. 23. 27. IV. Of the Kedarenes, and the kingdoms of Hazor, v. 28. 33. V. Of the Elamites, v. 34. 39. When Israel was scarcely saved, where shall all these appear?

1. **C**ONCERNING the Ammonites, thus saith the LORD, Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? why then doth their king inherit Gad, and his people dwell in his cities? 2. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burnt with fire: then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the LORD. 3. Howl, O Heshbon; for Ai is spoiled: cry, ye daughters of Rabbah, gird ye with sackcloth; lament, and run to and fro by the hedges: for their king shall go into captivity, and his priests and his princes together. 4. Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, thy flowing valley, O backsliding daughter? that trusted in her treasures, saying, Who shall come unto me? 5. Behold, I will bring a fear upon thee, saith the Lord God of hosts, from all those that be about thee; and ye shall be driven out every man right forth; and none shall gather up him that wandereth. 6. And afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the LORD.

The Ammonites were next, both in kindred and neighbourhood, to the Moabites, and therefore are next set to the bar. Their country joined to that of the two tribes and a half, on the other side Jordan, and was but a bad neighbour; however, being a neighbour, they shall have a share in these circular predictions.

1. An action is here brought, in God's name, against the Ammonites, for an illegal encroachment upon the rightful possessions of the tribe of Gad, that lay next them, v. 1. A writ of inquiry is brought to discover what title they had to those territories, which, upon the carrying away of the Gileadites by the king of Assyria, (2 Kings xv. 29. —1 Chron. v. 26.) were left almost dispeopled, at least unguarded, and an easy prey to the next invader. What! Does it escheat *ob defectum sanguinis* —for want of an heir? Hath Israel no sons? Hath he no heir? Are there no Gadites left, to whom the right of inheritance belongs? Or, if there were not, are there no Israelites, none left of Judah, that are nearer akin to them than you are? Why then does their king, as if he were entitled to the forfeited estates, or Milcom, their idol, as if he had the right to dispose of it to his worshippers, inherit Gad, and his people dwell in the cities which fell by lot to that tribe of God's people. Nay, they were sons and heirs of their own body, *en ventre de sa mere*—in their mother's womb, and the Ammonites, to prevent their claim, most barbarously murdered them; (Amos i. 13.) *They ripped up the women with child, of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border*; that, having seized it, none might rise up hereafter to recover it from them. Thus they magnified themselves against their border, and boasted it was their own, Zeph. ii. 8. Note, Though among men might often prevails against right, yet that might shall be controlled by the Almighty, who sits in the throne, judging aright; and those will find themselves mistaken, who think every thing their own which they can lay their hands on, or which none yet appears to lay claim to. As there is justice owing to

owners, so also to their heirs, when they are dead, whom it is a great sin to defraud, though they either know not their right, or know not how to come at it. This shall be reckoned for particularly, when injuries of this kind are done to God's people.

2. Judgment is here given against them for this violence.

(1.) Terrors shall come upon them; God *will cause an alarm of war to be heard, even in Rabbah, their capital city, and a very strong one, v. 2. The Lord God of hosts, who has all armies at his command, will bring a fear upon them from all that be about them, v. 5.* Note, God has many ways to terrify those who have been a terror to his people.

(2.) Their cities shall be laid in ruins; *Rabbah, the mother-city, shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters, the other cities that have a dependence upon her, and receive law from her as daughters, shall be burnt with fire; so that the inhabitants shall be forced to quit them, and they shall cry, and gird themselves with sackcloth, as having lost all they have, and not knowing whither to betake themselves.*

(3.) Their country, which they were so proud of, shall be wasted, (v. 4.) *Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, and trustest in thy treasures, O backsliding daughter?* They are charged with backsliding or turning away from God and from his worship, for they were the posterity of righteous Lot. It is true, they had never been so in covenant with God as Israel was; yet all idolaters may be called *backsliders*, for the worship of the true God was prior to that of false gods. *They were unward and refractory; so some read it: and when they had forsaken their God, they gloried in their valleys, particularly one that was called the flowing valley, because it flowed with all good things.* These they had violently taken away from Israel, and gloried in it when they had done so. They gloried in the strength of their valleys, so surrounded with mountains, that they were inaccessible; gloried in the products of them, gloried in the *treasures* they got together out of them, *saying, Who shall come unto me?* While they bathed themselves in the pleasures of their country, they flattered themselves with a conceit that they should never be disturbed in the enjoyment of them; *To-morrow shall be as this day; therefore they set God and his judgments at defiance; they are proud, voluptuous, and secure; but wherefore dost thou do so?* Note, Those who backslide and turn away from God have little reason either to take complacency, or to put confidence, in any worldly enjoyments whatsoever, Hos. ix. 1.

(4.) Their people, from the least to the greatest, shall be forced out of the country; some shall flee to seek for shelter, others shall be carried into captivity, so that their land shall be quite evacuated; *Their king and his princes, nay, and Milcom, their god, and his priests, shall go into captivity, (v. 3.) and every man shall be driven out right forth, shall take the next way, and make the best of it in his flight, (v. 5.) forgetting the valleys, the flowing valleys, which now fail them.* And, to complete their misery, *none shall gather up him that wanders, none shall open their doors to them, as Jael to Sisera, to entertain them; and those that flee shall be so much in care to secure themselves, that they shall not take notice of others, no, not of those that are nearest to them, that wander, and are at a loss which way to go, as ch. xlvii. 3.*

(5.) Then the country of the Ammonites shall fall into the hands of the remaining Israelites; (v. 2.) *Then shall Israel be heir to them that were his heirs, shall possess himself of their land, who had possessed themselves of his, by way of reprisal.*

Note, The equity of Divine Providence is to be acknowledged, when the losses of the injured are recompensed out of the unjust gains of the injurious. Though the enemies of God's Israel may make a prey of them for awhile, the tables will shortly be turned.

3. Yet there is a prospect given them of mercy hereafter, (v. 6.) as before to Moab. The day will come, when the *captivity of the children of Ammon will be brought again; for so it is in human affairs, the wheel goes round.*

7. Concerning Edom, thus saith the LORD of hosts, *Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished?* 8. Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan; for I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time that I will visit him. 9. If grape-gatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleanings? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough. 10. But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours, and he is not. 11. Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me. 12. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, they whose judgment *was* not to drink of the cup have assuredly drunken; and art thou he that shall altogether go unpunished? thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink of it. 13. For I have sworn by myself, saith the LORD, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes. 14. I have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, *saying, Gather ye together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle.* 15. For, lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men. 16. Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thy heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD. 17. Also Edom shall be a desolation; every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. 18. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it. 19. Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong: but I will suddenly make him run away from her; and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her?

for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? who is that shepherd that will stand before me? 20. Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Edom; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out; surely he shall make their habitations desolate with them. 21. The earth is moved at the noise of their fall; at the cry, the noise thereof was heard in the Red Sea. 22. Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah: and at that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

The Edomites come next to receive their doom from God, by the mouth of Jeremiah; they also were old enemies to the Israel of God; but their day will come to be reckoned with, and it is now at hand, and is foretold, not only for warning to them, but for comfort to the Israel of God, whose afflictions were very much aggravated by their triumphs over them, and joy in their calamity, Ps. cxxxvii. 7. Many of the expressions used in this prophecy concerning Edom, are borrowed from the prophecy of Obadiah, which is concerning Edom; for all the prophets being inspired by one and the same Spirit, there must needs be a wonderful harmony and agreement in their predictions.

Now here it is foretold,

1. That the country of Edom should be all wasted, and made desolate; that the calamity of Esau should be brought upon him, the calamity he has deserved, and God has long designed him, for his old sins, v. 8. The time is at hand when God will visit him, and call him to an account, and then they shall flee from the sword, turn back from the battle, and dwell deep in some close caverns, where they shall hide themselves. All they have shall be carried off by the conqueror: whereas *grape-gatherers* will leave some gleanings, and even *thieves* know when they have enough, and will destroy no further, that they destroy them shall never be satiated, (v. 9, 10.) they shall make Esau quite bare, shall strip the Edomites of all they have, shall find out ways and means to come at their most hidden treasure, shall discover even the *secret places*, where they thought to secure their wealth, and rifle them, so that they shall none of them save their wealth, no, nor save themselves or their children, that might be concealed in a little room; *He shall not be able to hide himself, and his seed too is spoiled.* His brethren the Moabites, and his neighbours the Philistines, whom he might have expected succours from, or at least shelter with, are spoiled as well as he, and disabled to do him any service. *And he is not, or, there is not he, there is none to him, none left him,* that may say what follows, (v. 11.) *Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive.* When they are flying, or dying, there shall be none left, no relation, no friend, no, not so much as any parish-officers to take care of their wives and children that they leave behind. Edom is not, he is cut off and gone; nor is there any to say, *Leave me thine orphans.* If the master of a family be cut off, or forced away, it is some comfort if he have a friend to leave his family with, whom he can confide in; but they shall have none such, for they shall all be involved in the same calamity. The Chaldee makes these to be the words of God to his people, distinguishing them from the Edomites in this calamity;

and they read it, "*But you, O house of Israel, you shall not leave your orphans, I will secure them, and let your widows rest on my word.*" Whatever becomes of the widows and fatherless of the Edomites, I will take care of yours." Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to the children of God, when they are dying, that they may leave their surviving relations with God, may, in faith, commit them to him, and encourage them to trust in him; and though they cannot promise themselves great things in the world for them, yet they may hope that he will preserve them alive, always provided that they trust in him. Let the Edomites, for their part, count upon no other than to be made a desolation, and a reproach, for the decree is gone forth, God hath sworn it by himself, (v. 13.) that their cities shall be wasted, nay, they shall be perpetual wastes, they shall be made mean and despicable; they had made a mighty figure, but God will make them small among the heathen; and they that despised God's people shall themselves be despised among men; (v. 15. Obad. 2.) nay, they shall be made monstrous, and even a prodigy; (v. 17.) *Edom shall be such a desolation, that every one who goes by shall be astonished:* nay, worse yet, they shall be made a terror, Edom shall be made like Sodom and Gomorrah, none shall care for coming near the ruins of it, *no man shall abide there,* (v. 18.) such a frightful place shall it be made!

2. That the instruments of this destruction should be very resolute and formidable. They have their commission from God, he summons them into this service; (v. 14.) *I have heard a rumour, or report, from the Lord, heard it by the prophecy of Obadiah, heard it by a whisper to myself, that an ambassador, or herald, or messenger, is sent to the Gentiles, who are to lay Edom waste, saying, Gather ye together, muster all the forces ye can, and come against her;* for (v. 20.) this is the counsel that he hath taken against Edom: the matter is settled, the decree is gone forth, and there is no resisting it; God has determined that Edom shall be laid waste, and then he that is to be employed in it shall come swiftly and strongly. Nebuchadrezzar is he, of whom it is here foretold, (1.) That he shall come up like a lion, with fierceness and fury, like a lion enraged by the swelling of Jordan overflowing his banks, which forces him out of his covert by the water-side, into the higher grounds, v. 19. He shall come roaring, come to devour all that come in his way. He shall come against the habitation of the strong, the forts and castles; and *I will cause him to come suddenly into the land,* (so the next words might well be read,) so as to find them unprovided with necessities for a defence; for I will look out a chosen man to appoint over her, to do this execution, a man fit for the purpose, one chosen out of the people: for when God has work to do, he will find out the fittest instruments to be employed in it. "*Who is like me for choosing the instruments, and spiriting them for the work? And, who will appoint me the time? Who will challenge me, and fix a time and place to meet me? Who will join issue with me in battle? And when I send a lion into the flock, Who is that shepherd, that can, or dare, stand before me, or against me, to oppose that lion, and think to rescue any of the flock?*" Note, When God has work to do of any kind, he will soon find those that are able to engage in it; and all the world cannot find those that are able to engage against it. Nay, if God will have Edom destroyed, and their people dislodged, there needs not a lion, a fierce lion, to do it; *even the least of the flock shall draw them out,* (v. 20.) the meanest servant in Nebuchadrezzar's retinue, the weakest of all that follow his camp, shall draw them out for the slaughter, shall force them to flee, or to surrender, and make their habita-

tions desolate with them. God can bring to pass the greatest works by instruments least likely. When the Chaldean army comes against the Edomites, all hands shall be employed, and the poorest soldier in it shall have a pluck at them. (2.) Nebuchadrezzar shall come, not only like a lion, the king of beasts, but like an eagle, the king of birds, *v. 22. He shall fly as the eagle upon his prey*, so swiftly, so strongly; shall clap his wings upon Bozrah, to secure it for himself, (as before, *ch. xlviii. 40.*) and immediately *the hearts of the mighty men shall fail them*, for they shall see he is an enemy that it is in vain to struggle with.

3. That the Edomites' confidences should all fail them in the day of their distress. (1.) They trusted to their wisdom, but that shall stand them in no stead; this is the first thing fastened upon in this prophecy against Edom, *v. 7.* That nation used to be famous for wisdom, and their statesmen were thought to excel in politics; and yet now they shall take such wrong measures in all their counsels, and be so baffled in all their designs, that people shall ask, with wonder, What is the matter with the Edomites? *Is wisdom no more in Teman?* Are the wise men of the east country (1 Kings iv. 30.) become fools? Are those at *their wits' end*, that were thought to have the monopoly of prudence? *Is counsel perished from the understanding men?* It is so, when God is designing the ruin of a people; for whom he will destroy he infatuates. See Job xii. 20. *Is their wisdom vanished? Is it tired?* So some; *Is it worn out?* So others; *Is it become useless?* So others. Yes, it will do them no service when God comes forth to contend with them. (2.) They trusted to their strength, but neither shall that avail them, *v. 16.* They had been a terror to all their neighbours, every body feared them, and truckled to them, and this made them proud and conceited of themselves, and their own strength, and very secure; because no neighbouring nation durst meddle with them, they thought no nation in the world durst. Their country was much of it mountainous, having many passes which they thought themselves able to make good against any invader; but this terribleness of theirs deceived them, and so did their imaginary inaccessibleness; they did not prove so strong as they were formidable, nor so safe as they were secure. High as they are, God will bring them down; for as *there is no wisdom*, so there is no might, *against the Lord.* See these expressions, Obad. 3, 4, 8.

4. That their destruction should be inevitable, and very remarkable. (1.) God hath determined it; (*v. 12.*) he hath said it; nay, (*v. 13.*) he hath sworn it, that *the Edomites shall not go unpunished*, but they shall *drink the cup of trembling*, which is put into the hands of all their neighbours; even they, *whose judgment, or doom, was not to drink of the cup*, who had not so well deserved it as they had done, nations that had not been such enemies to Israel as they had been; or, Israel itself, that was God's peculiar people, and among whom there were many, very many, who kept his ordinances, upon which account they might have expected an exemption, and yet they had been made to drink of the bitter cup; and shall the Edomites think to pass it? No; they shall *surely drink of it.* Note, When God punishes the less guilty, it is folly for the more guilty to promise themselves impunity; and when judgment begins at God's house, it will reach the strangers. (2.) All the world shall take notice of it; (*v. 21.*) *The earth is moved*, and all the nations put into a concern, *at the noise of their fall*; the news of it shall make them tremble. *The noise of the outcry is heard at the Red sea*, which flowed upon the coasts of Edom. So loud shall be the shouts of the conquerors, and the shrieks of the

conquered, and such a mighty noise shall the news of this destruction of Idumea make in the nation, that it shall be heard among the ships that lie in the Red sea to take in lading, (1 Kings ix. 26.) and then they shall carry the news of it to the remotest shore. Note, The fall of those who have affected to make a noise with their pomp and power, will make so much the greater noise.

23. Concerning Damascus. Hamath is confounded, and Arpad; for they have heard evil tidings; they are faint-hearted: *there is sorrow on the sea*; it cannot be quiet. 24. Damascus is waxed feeble, and turneth herself to flee, and fear hath seized on her: anguish and sorrows have taken her, as a woman in travail. 25. How is the city of praise not left, the city of my joy! 26. Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets, and all the men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD of hosts. 27. And I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall consume the palaces of Ben-hadad.

The kingdom of Syria lay north of Canaan, as that of Edom lay south, and thither we must now remove, and take a view of the approaching fate of that kingdom, which had been often vexatious to the Israel of God. Damascus was the metropolis of that kingdom, and the ruin of the whole is supposed in the ruin of that; yet Hamath and Arpad, two other considerable cities, are named, (*v. 23.*) and *the palaces of Ben-hadad*, which he built, are particularly marked for ruin; (*v. 27.*) see also Amos i. 4. Some think Ben-hadad (the son of Hadad, either their idol, or one of their ancient kings, whence the rest descended,) was a common name of the kings of Syria, as Pharaoh of the kings of Egypt. Now observe concerning the judgments of Damascus,

1. It begins with a terrible fright and faint-heartedness. They *hear evil tidings*, that the king of Babylon, with all his force, is coming against them, and *they are confounded*, they know not what measures to take for their own safety, their souls are melted, *they are faint-hearted*, they have no spirit left them, they are like *the troubled sea, that cannot be quiet*, (Isa. lvii. 20.) or like *men in a storm at sea*; (Ps. cvii. 26.) or, the sorrow that begins in the city shall go to the sea-coast, *v. 23.* See how easily God can dispirit those nations that have been most celebrated for valour! *Damascus now waxes feeble*; (*v. 24.*) a city that thought she could have looked the most formidable enemy in the face, now *turns herself to flee*, and owns it is to no more purpose to think of contending with her fate, than for *a woman in labour* to contend with her pains, which she cannot escape, but must yield to. It was *a city of praise*, (*v. 25.*) not praise to God, but to herself; a city much commended and admired by all strangers that visited it. It was *a city of joy*, where there was an affluence and confluence of all the delights of the sons of men, and abundance of mirth in the enjoyment of them. We read it, (though there is no necessity for it,) *the city of my joy*, which the prophet himself had sometimes visited with pleasure. Or, it may be the speech of the king lamenting the ruin of the city of his joy. But now it is all overwhelmed with fear and grief. Note, These deceive themselves who place their happiness in carnal joys; for God in his providence can soon cast a damp upon them, and put an end to them. He

can soon make a *city of praise* to be a reproach, and a *city of joy* to be a terror to itself.

2. It ends with a terrible fall and fire. (1.) The inhabitants are slain; (v. 26.) The *young men*, who should fight the enemy, and defend the city, *shall fall by the sword in her streets; and all the men of war*, mighty men, expert in war, and engaged in the service of their country, *shall be cut off*. (2.) The city is laid in ashes; (v. 27.) The *fire* is kindled by the besiegers in the wall, but it shall devour all before it, the *palaces of Ben-hadad* particularly, where so much mischief had formerly been hatched against God's Israel, for which it is now thus visited.

23. Concerning Kedar, and concerning the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon shall smite, thus saith the LORD; Arise ye, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east. 29. Their tents and their flocks shall they take away: they shall take to themselves their curtains, and all their vessels, and their camels; and they shall cry unto them, Fear is on every side. 30. Flee, get you far off, dwell deep, O ye inhabitants of Hazor, saith the LORD; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath taken counsel against you, and hath conceived a purpose against you. 31. Arise, get you up unto the wealthy nation, that dwelleth without care, saith the LORD, which have neither gates nor bars, which dwell alone. 32. And their camels shall be a booty, and the multitude of their cattle a spoil; and I will scatter into all winds them that are in the utmost corners; and I will bring their calamity from all sides thereof, saith the LORD. 33. And Hazor shall be a dwelling for dragons, and a desolation for ever: there shall no man abide there, nor any son of man dwell in it.

These verses foretell the desolation that Nebuchadrezzar and his forces should make among the people of Kedar, (who descended from Kedar the son of Ishmael, and inhabited a part of Arabia the Stony,) and of the kingdoms, the petty principalities of Hazor, that joined to them, who, perhaps, were originally Canaanites, of the kingdom of Hazor, in the north of Canaan, which had Jabin for its king, but, being driven thence, settled in the deserts of Arabia, and associated themselves with the Kedarites. Concerning this people, we may here observe,

1. What was their present state and posture. They dwelt in *tents*, and had no walls, but *curtains*, (v. 29.) no fortified cities; they had *neither gates nor bars*, v. 31. They were shepherds, and had no treasures, but stock upon land, no money, but flocks and camels. They had no soldiers among them, for they were in no fear of invaders; no merchants, for they *dwelt alone*, v. 31. Those of other nations neither came among them, nor traded with them; but they lived within themselves, content with the products and pleasures of their own country. This was their manner of living, very different from that of the nations that were round about them. And, (1.) They were very rich; though they had no trade, no treasures, yet they are here said to be a *wealthy nation*, (v. 31.) because they had a suffi-

ciency to answer all the occasions of human life, and they were content with it. Note, Those are truly rich who have enough to supply their necessities, and know when they have enough. We need not go to the treasures of kings and provinces, or to the cash of merchants, to look for wealthy people; they may be found among shepherds that *dwell in tents*. (2.) They were very easy, *they dwelt without care*, their wealth was such as nobody envied them, or, if any did, they might come peaceably, and enjoy the like, and therefore they fear nobody. Note, Those that live innocently and honestly may live very securely, though they have *neither gates nor bars*.

2. The design of the king of Babylon against them, and the descent he made upon them; *He has taken counsel against you, and has conceived a purpose against you*, v. 30. That proud man resolves it shall never be said, that he, who had conquered so many strong cities, will leave those unconquered that *dwell in tents*. It was strange that that eagle would stoop to catch these flies; that so great a prince should play at such small game; but all is fish that comes to the ambitious, covetous man's net. Note, It will not always secure men from suffering wrong, to be able to say that they have done no wrong; not to have given offence will not be a defence against such men as Nebuchadrezzar. Yet, how unrighteous soever he was in doing it, God was righteous in directing it. These people had lived inoffensively among their neighbours, as many do, who yet, like them, are guilty before God; and it was to punish them for their offences against him, that God said, (v. 28.) *Arise, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east*. They will do it to gratify their own covetousness and ambition, but God orders it for the correcting of an unthankful people, and for warning to a careless world, to expect trouble when they seem to be most safe. God says to the Chaldeans, (v. 31.) *Arise, get up to the wealthy nation that dwells without care; go, and give them an alarm, that none may imagine their mountain stands so strong, that it cannot be removed*.

3. The great amazement that this put them into, and the great desolation hereby made among them; *They shall cry unto them*, those on the borders shall send the alarm into all parts of the country, which shall be put into the utmost confusion by it; they shall cry, *"Fear is on every side, we are surrounded by the enemy;"* the very terror of which shall drive them all to their feet, and they shall none of them have any heart to make resistance. The enemy shall *proclaim fear upon them, or against them, on every side*; they need not strike a stroke, they shall shout them out of their tents, v. 29. Upon the first alarm, they shall *flee, get far off, and dwell deep*, (v. 30.) as the Edomites, v. 8. And it will be found that this *fear on every side* is not groundless, for *their calamity shall be brought from all sides thereof*, v. 32. No marvel there are *fears on every side*, when there are foes on every side. The issue will be, (1.) What they have will be a prey to the Chaldeans; they shall *take to themselves their curtains and vessels*; though they are but plain and coarse, and they have better of their own, yet they shall take them for spite, and spoil for spoiling sake. *They shall carry away their tents and their flocks*, v. 29. Their camels shall be a booty to those that came for nothing else, v. 32. (2.) It is not said that any of them shall be slain, for they attempt not to make any resistance, and their tents and flocks are accepted as a ransom for their lives; but they shall be dislodged and dispersed; though now they dwell in the *utmost corners*, out of the way, and therefore they think out of the reach of danger, (by this character those people were distinguished, ch. ix. 26.—xxv. 23.) yet they shall from thence be *scattered into all winds*, into all

parts of the world. Note, Privacy and obscurity are not always a protection and security. Many that affect to be strangers to the world, may yet by unthought-of providences be forced into it; and those that live most retired, may have the same lot with those that thrust themselves forth, and lie most exposed. (3.) Their country shall lie uninhabited; for, lying remote, and out of all high roads, and having neither cities nor lands inviting to strangers, none shall care to succeed them, so that *Hazor shall be a desolation for ever*, v. 33. If busy men be displaced, many strive to get into their places, because they lived great; but here are easy, quiet men displaced, and *no man* cares to *abide* where they did, because they lived mean.

34. The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against Elam, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying, 35. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might. 36. And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come. 37. For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies, and before them that seek their life; and I will bring evil upon them, *even* my fierce anger, saith the LORD; and I will send the sword after them, till I have consumed them: 38. And I will set my throne in Elam, and will destroy from thence the king and the princes, saith the LORD. 39. But it shall come to pass in the latter days, *that* I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the LORD.

This prophecy is dated in the beginning of Zedekiah's reign; it is probable that the other prophecies against the Gentiles, going before, were at the same time. The Elamites were the Persians, descended from Elam the son of Shem; (Gen. x. 22.) yet some think it was only that part of Persia which lay nearest to the Jews, which was called *Elymais*, and adjoined to Media-Elam, which, say they, had acted against God's Israel, *bare the quiver* in an expedition against them, (Isa. xxii. 6,) and therefore must be reckoned with among the rest. It is here foretold, in general, that God will *bring evil upon them, even his fierce anger*, and that is evil enough, it has *all evil in it*, v. 37. In particular,

1. Their forces shall be disabled, and rendered incapable of doing them any service. The Elamites were famous archers, but, *Behold, I will break the bow of Elam*, (v. 35.) will ruin their artillery, and then the *chief of their might* is gone. God often orders it so, that that which we most trust to first fails us; and that which was *the chief of our might* proves the least of our help.

2. Their people shall be dispersed. There shall come enemies against them from all parts of the world, and they shall all carry some of them away captive into their respective countries; while others shall flee, some one way, and some another, to shift for themselves, so that *there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come*, v. 36. *The four winds* shall be brought upon them; the storm shall come sometimes from one point, and sometimes from another, to toss and hurry them several ways; and we know not from what point

the wind of trouble may blow; but if God compass us with his favour, we are safe, and may be easy, which way soever the storm comes. Fear shall drive them into other countries; they shall *be dismayed before their enemies*; but, as if that were not enough, *I will send the sword after them*, v. 37. Note, God can make his judgments follow those that think by flight to escape them, and to get out of the reach of them. *Evil pursues sinners*.

3. Their princes shall be destroyed, and the government quite changed; (v. 38.) *I will set my throne in Elam*. The throne of Nebuchadnezzar shall be set there, or the throne of Cyrus, who began his conquests with Elymais. Or, it may be meant of the throne on which God sits for judgment; he will make them know that he reigns, that he *judges in the earth*, and that *kings and princes* are accountable to him, and that high as they are he is above them. The king of Elam was famous of old, Gen. xiv. 1. Chedorlomer was king of Elam, and a mighty man he was in his day; the nations about him served him; his successes, we may suppose, made a great figure; but the king of Elam is no more to God than another man. When God *sets his throne in Elam, he will destroy from thence the king and the princes* that are, and set up whom he pleases.

4. Yet the destruction of Elam shall not be perpetual; (v. 39.) *In the latter days I will bring again the captivity of Elam*. When Cyrus had destroyed Babylon, brought the empire into the hands of the Persians, the Elamites, no doubt, returned in triumph out of all the countries whither they were scattered, and settled again in their own country. But this promise was to have its full and principal accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when we find Elamites particularly among those, who, when the Holy Ghost was given, heard spoken in *their own tongues, the wonderful works of God*; (Acts ii. 9.) and that is the most desirable return of the captivity. *If the Son makes you free, then you shall be free indeed*.

CHAP. L.

In this chapter, and that which follows, we have the judgment of Babylon, which is put last of Jeremiah's prophecies against the Gentiles, because it was last accomplished; and when the cup of God's fury went round, (ch. xxv. 17.) the king of Sheshach, Babylon, drank last. Babylon was employed as the rod in God's hand for the chastising of all the other nations, and now at length that rod shall be thrown into the fire. The destruction of Babylon by Cyrus was foretold, long before it came to its height, by Isaiah, and now again, when it is come to its height, by Jeremiah; for though at this time he saw that kingdom flourishing *like a green bay-tree*, yet at the same time he foresaw it withered and cut down. And as Isaiah's prophecies of the destruction of Babylon, and the deliverance of Israel out of it, seem designed to typify the evangelical triumphs of all believers over the powers of darkness, and the great salvation wrought out by our Lord Jesus Christ; so Jeremiah's prophecies of the same events seem designed to point at apocalyptic triumphs of the gospel-church in the latter days over the New Testament Babylon, many passages in the Revelation being borrowed from hence. The kingdom of Babylon being much larger and stronger than any other of the kingdoms here prophesied against, its fall was the more considerable in itself; and it having been more oppressive to the people of God than any of the others, the prophet is very large upon this subject, for the comfort of the captives; and what was foretold in general often before, (ch. xxv. 12. and xxvii. 7.) is here more particularly described, and with a great deal of prophetic heat as well as light. The terrible judgments God had in store for Babylon, and the glorious blessings he had in store for his people that were captives there, are intermixed and counterchanged in the prophecy of this chapter; for Babylon was destroyed to make way for the turning again of the captivity of God's people. Here is, 1. The ruin of Babylon, (v. 1. . 3.) and again, (v. 9. . 16.) and again, (v. 21. . 32.) and again, v. 35. . 46. 11. The

redemption of God's people, (v. 4. . 8.) and again, (v. 17. . 20.) and again, v. 33, 34. And these being set the one against the other, it is easy to say which one would choose to take *one's* lot with, the persecuting Babylonians, who, though now in pomp, are reserved for so great a ruin; or the persecuted Israelites, who, though now in thralldom, are reserved for so great a glory.

1. **T**HE word that the LORD spake against Babylon, and against the land of the Chaldeans, by Jeremiah the prophet. 2. Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces. 3. For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast. 4. In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the LORD their God. 5. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten. 6. My people hath been lost sheep; their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting-place. 7. All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice: even the LORD, the hope of their fathers. 8. Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he-goats before the flocks.

Here is,

1. A word spoken against Babylon, by him whose words all agree with his word, and none of whose words fall to the ground. The king of Babylon had been very kind to Jeremiah, and yet he must foretell the ruin of that kingdom; for God's prophets must not be governed by favour or affection. Whoever are our friends, if, notwithstanding, they are God's enemies, we dare not speak peace to them.

1. The destruction of Babylon is here spoken of as a thing done, v. 2. Let it be published to the nation as a piece of news, true news, and great news, and news they are all concerned in; let them hang out the flag, as is usual on days of triumph, to give notice of it; let all the world take notice of it, *Babylon is taken*; let God have the honour of it, let his people have the comfort of it, and therefore do not conceal it. Take care that it be known, that *the LORD may be known by those judgments which he executes*, Ps. ix. 16.

2. It is spoken of as a thing done thoroughly. For, (1.) The very idols of Babylon, which the people would protect with all possible care, and from which they expected protection, shall be destroyed. Bel and Merodach were their two princi-

pal deities, they shall be *confounded*, and the images of them *broken to pieces*. (2.) The country shall be laid waste, (v. 3.) *cut of the north*; from Media, which lay north of Babylon, and from Assyria, through which Cyrus made his descent upon Babylon; from thence the nation shall come, that shall make *her land desolate*. Their land was north of the countries that they destroyed, who were therefore threatened with evil from the north; (*Omne malum ab aquilone—Every evil comes from the north*;) but God will find out nations yet further north to come upon them. The pomp and power of old Rome were brought down by northern nations, the Goths and Vandals.

II. Here is a word spoken for the people of God, and for their comfort, both *the children of Israel* and *of Judah*; for many there were of the ten tribes, that associated with those of the two tribes in their return out of Babylon. Now here,

1. It is promised that they shall return to their God first, and then to their own land; and the promise of their conversion and reformation is that which makes way for all the other promises, v. 4, 5. (1.) They shall *lament after the Lord*; (as the whole house of Israel did in Samuel's time, 1 Sam. vii. 2.) they shall *go weeping*. These tears flow not from the sorrow of the world, as those when they went into captivity, but from godly sorrow; they are tears of repentance for sin, tears of joy for the goodness of God, in the dawning of the day of their deliverance, which, for aught that appears, does more toward the bringing of them to mourn for sin, than all the calamities of their captivity; that prevails to *lead them to repentance*, when the other did not prevail to drive them to it. Note, It is a good sign that God is coming toward a people in ways of mercy, when they begin to be tenderly affected under his hand. (2.) They shall *inquire after the Lord*; they shall not sink under their sorrows, but bestir themselves to find out comfort where it is to be had; *They shall go weeping to seek the Lord their God*; Those that seek the Lord must seek him *sorrowing*, as Christ's parents sought him, Luke ii. 48. And those that sorrow must seek the Lord, and then their sorrow shall soon be turned into joy, for he will be found of those that so seek him. They shall *seek the Lord as their God*, and shall now have no more to do with idols. When they shall hear that the idols of Babylon are *confounded and broken*, it will be seasonable for them to inquire after their own God, and to return to Him who lives for ever. Therefore men are deceived in false gods, that they may depend on the true God only. (3.) They shall think of returning to their own country again; they shall think of it not only as a mercy, but as a duty, because there only is the *holy hill of Zion*, on which once stood the *house of the Lord their God*, v. 5. *They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward*. Zion was the city of their solemnities, they often thought of it in the depth of their captivity; (Ps. cxxxvii. 1.) but now that the ruin of Babylon gave them some hopes of a release, they talk of nothing else but of going back to Zion. Their hearts were upon it before, and now they *set their faces thitherward*; they long to be there, they set out for Zion, and resolve not to take up short. The journey is long, they know not the road, but they shall *ask the way*, for they will press forward till they come to Zion; and as they are determined not to turn back, so they are in care not to miss the way. This represents the return of poor souls to God: heaven is the Zion they aim at as their end, on this they have set their hearts, toward this they have *set their faces*, and therefore they *ask the way* thither. They do not ask the way to heaven, and set their faces toward the world; nor set their faces toward heaven, and

go on at a venture without asking the way. But in all true converts there are both a sincere desire to attain the end, and a constant care to keep in the way; and a blessed sight it is, to see people thus asking the way to heaven with their faces thitherward. (4.) They shall renew their covenant to walk with God closer for the future; *Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant.* They had broken covenant with God, had in effect separated themselves from him, but now they resolve to *join themselves to him again*, by engaging themselves afresh to be his. Thus, when backsliders return, they must *do their first works*, must renew the covenant they first made; and it must be a *perpetual covenant*, that must never be broken; and, in order to that, must never be forgotten; for a due remembrance of it will be the means of a due observance of it.

2. Their present case is lamented as very sad, and as having been long so; "*My people*" (for he owns them as his, now that they are returning to him) "*have been lost sheep*, (v. 6.) they have *gone from mountain to hill*, have been hurried from place to place, and could find no pasture, *they have forgotten their resting-place* in their own country, and cannot find their way to it." And that which aggravated their misery, was, (1.) That they were *led astray by their own shepherds*, their own princes and priests; they turned them from their duty, and so provoked God to turn them out of their own land. It is bad with a people when their leaders cause them to err, when those that should direct and reform them seduce and debauch them; and when those that should secure and advance their interests are the betrayers of them. (2.) That in their wanderings they lay exposed to the beasts of prey, who thought they were entitled to them, as waifs and strays that have no owner; (v. 7.) it is with them as with wandering sheep, *all that found them have devoured them*, and made a prey of them; and when they did them the greatest injuries, they laughed at them, telling them it was what their own prophets had many a time told them they deserved: that was far from justifying those who did them wrong, yet they bitered them with this excuse, *We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord*; but they could not pretend that they had sinned against them. And see what notion they had of the Lord they had sinned against, not as the only true and living God, but only as the *Habitation of justice*, and the *Hope of their fathers*; they had put a contempt upon the temple, and upon the tradition of their ancestors, and therefore deserved to suffer these hard things. And yet it was indeed an aggravation of their sin, and justified God, though it did not justify their adversaries in what was done to them, that they had *forsaken the Habitation of justice*, and him that was the *Hope of their fathers*.

3. They are called upon to hasten away, as soon as ever the door of liberty was opened to them; (v. 8.) "*Remove*, not only out of the borders, but *out of the midst of Babylon*; though you be ever so well seated there, think not to settle there, but hasten to Zion, and *be as the he-goats before the flocks*, strive which shall be foremost, which shall lead in so good a work;" a he-goat is *comely in going*, (Prov. xxx. 31.) because he goes first. It is a graceful thing to be forward in a good work, and to set others a good example.

9. For, lo, I will raise, and cause to come up against Babylon, an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken: their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none

shall return in vain. 10. And Chaldea shall be a spoil: all that spoil her shall be satisfied, saith the LORD. 11. Because ye were glad, because ye rejoiced, O ye destroyers of my heritage; because ye are grown fat as the heifer at grass, and bellow as bulls; 12. Your mother shall be sore confounded; she that bare you shall be ashamed: behold, the hindermost of the nations shall be a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert. 13. Because of the wrath of the LORD it shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate: every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues. 14. Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about: all ye that bend the bow shoot at her, spare no arrows; for she hath sinned against the LORD. 15. Shout against her round about; she hath given her hand: her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down; for it is the vengeance of the LORD: take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her. 16. Cut off the sower from Babylon, and him that handleth the sickle in the time of harvest: for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people, and they shall flee every one to his own land. 17. Israel is a scattered sheep, the lions have driven him away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him, and last this Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones. 18. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria. 19. And I will bring Israel again to his habitation, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied upon mount Ephraim and Gilead. 20. In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.

God is here, by his prophet, as afterward in his providence, proceeding in his controversy with Babylon. Observe,

1. The commission and charge given to the instruments that were to be employed in destroying Babylon. The army that is to do it, is called an *assembly of great nations*, (v. 9.) the Medes and Persians, and all their allies and auxiliaries; it is called an *assembly*, because regularly formed by the divine will and counsel to do this execution. God will *raise them up* to do it, will incline them to, and fit them for, this service, and then he will *cause them to come up*, for all their motions are under his conduct and direction: he shall give the word of command, shall order them to *put themselves in array against Babylon*, (v. 14.) and then *they shall put themselves in array*, (v. 9.) for what God appoints to be done shall be done; and *from thence she shall*

be quickly taken; from their first sitting down before it, they shall be still gaining ground against it till it be taken. God shall bid them *shoot at her, and spare no arrows*, (v. 14.) and then *their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man*, that has both skill and strength, a good eye, and a good hand; (v. 9.) *none shall return in vain*. When God gives commission, he will give success. Nay, they are bidden not only to *shoot at her*, (v. 14.) but to *shout against her*, (v. 15.) with a triumphant shout, as those that are already sure of victory. Those whom God directs to *shoot*, may do it with *shouting*, for they are sure not to miss the mark.

2. The desolation and destruction itself shall be brought upon Babylon. This is set forth here in a great variety of expressions: (1.) The wealth of Babylon shall be a rich and easy prey to the conquerors; (v. 10.) *Chaldea shall be a spoil* to all her destroyers, who shall enrich themselves by plundering her, and, which is strange, *all that spoil her shall be satisfied*; they shall have so much, that even they themselves shall say that they have enough. (2.) The country of Babylon shall be dispeopled, and lie uninhabited; *It shall be wholly desolate*, (v. 13.) to that degree, that *every one who goeth by* shall triumph in her fall, and, instead of condoling with them, shall *hiss at all her plagues*, v. 13. (3.) Their ancestors shall be ashamed of their cowardice, in fleeing from the first onset; (v. 12.) or, *Your mother*, Babylon itself, the mother-city, *shall be confounded*, when she sees herself deserted by those that should have been her guards. Thus the first ages of Christians may justly be confounded and ashamed to see how unlike them the latter ages are, and how wretchedly they have degenerated; and no sin brings a surer and sorer ruin upon persons, or people, than apostacy. (4.) The great admirers of Babylon shall see it rendered very despicable: the last of kingdoms, the very tail of the nations, *shall it be, a wilderness, a dry land, a desert*, v. 12. The country that was populous, shall be dispeopled, that was enriched with a fertile soil, shall become barren. (5.) The great city, the head of it, shall be quite ruined, *her foundations are fallen*, and therefore *her walls are thrown down*; for how can the walls stand, when divine vengeance is at the door, and shakes the very foundations? It is the vengeance of the Lord, which nothing can contend with either in law or battle. (6.) There shall not be left in Babylon so much as the *poor of the land*, for *vine-dressers and husbandmen*, as there was in Israel; (v. 16.) *The sower shall be cut off from Babylon, and he that handles the sickle*; the country shall be so emptied of people, that there shall be none to till the ground, and gather in the fruits of it. Harvest shall come, and there shall be no reapers; seedness shall come, and there shall be no sower; God will do his part, but there shall be no men to do theirs. (7.) All their auxiliary forces, which they have hired into their service, shall desert them, as mercenary men often do upon the approach of danger; (v. 16.) *for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people*. This was threatened before, concerning Egypt, ch. xvi. 16.

3. The procuring, provoking cause of this destruction. It comes from God's displeasure; it is *because of the wrath of the Lord*, that Babylon shall be wholly desolate; (v. 13.) and his wrath is righteous, for, (v. 14.) *she hath sinned against the Lord*, therefore *spare no arrows*. Note, It is sin that makes men a mark for the arrows of God's judgments. An abundance of idolatry and immorality was to be found in Babylon, yet those are not mentioned as the reason of God's displeasure against them, but the injuries they had done to the people of God, from a principle of enmity to them as his

people. They have been the *destroyers of God's heritage*; (v. 11.) herein indeed God made use of them for the necessary correction of his people; and yet it is laid to their charge as a heinous crime, because they designed nothing but their utter destruction. (1.) What they did against Jerusalem they did with pleasure; (v. 11.) *Ye were glad, ye rejoiced*. God does not afflict his people willingly, and therefore takes it very ill if the instruments he employs, afflict them willingly. When Titus Vespasian destroyed Jerusalem, he wept over it, but these Chaldeans triumphed over it. (2.) The spoils of Jerusalem they made use of to feed their own luxury; *"Ye are grown fat as the heifer at grass, and bellow as bulls"*: your having conquered Jerusalem has made you very wanton and proud, easy to yourselves, formidable to all about you, and therefore you must *be a spoil*." They that have thus swallowed down riches, must vomit them up again. Therefore they have *given their hand*; (v. 15.) they have surrendered themselves to the conqueror, have tamely yielded, so that now you may *take vengeance on her*, now you may make reprisals, and *do unto her as she hath done*. (3.) They aimed at nothing less than the utter ruin of God's Israel; *Israel is a scattered sheep*, as before, (v. 6.) that is not only barked at and worried by dogs, but even lions, the most potent adversaries, have roared upon him, and *driven him away*, v. 17. One king of Assyria carried the ten tribes quite away, and devoured them; another invaded Judah, and plundered and impoverished it, tore the fleece and flesh of this poor sheep; and now at last this Nebuchadnezzar, that is the terror and plague of all his neighbours, has taken advantage of the low condition to which he is reduced, and he has fallen upon him, and *broken his bones*, has quite ruined him, and therefore the king of Babylon must be punished as the king of Assyria was, v. 18. Note, Those who pursue and prosecute the sins of their predecessors, must expect to be pursued and prosecuted by their plagues; if they do as they did, let them fare as they fared.

4. The mercy promised to the *Israel of God*, which shall not only accompany, but accrue from, the destruction of Babylon. (1.) God will return their captivity, they shall be released out of their bondage, and *brought again to their own habitation*, as sheep that were scattered, to their own fold, v. 19. They still retained a title to the land of Canaan, it is their habitation still, the discontinuance of their possession was not the destruction of their right, but now they shall recover the enjoyment of it again. (2.) He will restore their prosperity; they shall not only live, but live comfortably, in their own land again; they shall *feed upon Carmel and Bashan*, the richest and most fruitful parts of the country. These sheep shall be gathered from the deserts to which they were dispersed, and put again into good pasture, which their soul shall be satisfied with; though they shall come hungry to it, having been so long stinted, and straitened, and kept short, yet they shall find enough to satiate them, and shall have hearts to be satiated with it. They *inquired the way to Zion*, (v. 5.) where God was to be served and worshipped, that was it they chiefly aimed at in their return; but God will not only bring them thither, but bring them also to Carmel and Bashan, where they shall abundantly feed themselves. Note, They that return to God and their duty, shall find true satisfaction of soul in so doing; and they that *seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof*, that aim to make their habitation in Zion, the holy hill, shall have *other things added to them*, even all the comforts of *Ephraim and Gilead*, the fruitful hills. (3.) God will pardon their iniquity; this is

the root of all the rest; (v. 20.) *In those days the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none.* Not only the punishments of their iniquity shall be taken off, but the offence which it gave to God shall be forgotten, and he will be reconciled to them. Their sin shall be before him as if it had never been, it shall be blotted out as a cloud, crossed out as a debt, shall be cast behind his back; nay, it shall be cast into the depth of the sea, shall be no longer sealed up among God's treasures, nor in any danger of appearing again, or rising up against them. This denotes how fully God forgives sin; *he remembers it no more.* Note, Deliverances out of trouble are then comforts indeed, when they are the fruits of the forgiveness of sin, Isa. xxxviii. 17. Judah and Israel were so fully forgiven when they were brought back out of Babylon, that they are said to have *received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins*, Isa. xl. 2. This may include also a thorough reformation of their hearts and lives, as well as a full remission of their sins. If any seek for idols or any idolatrous customs among them, after their return, *there shall be none, they shall not find them*; their dross shall be purely purged away, and by that it shall appear that their guilt is so; *for I will pardon them whom I reserve; I will be propitious to them*; (so the word is;) and that must be through him who is the *Great Propitiation*. Note, Those whose sins God pardons, he reserves for something very great; for whom he *justifies*, *them he glorifies*.

21. Go up against the land of Merathaim, *even* against it, and against the inhabitants of Pekod: waste and utterly destroy after them, saith the LORD, and do according to all that I have commanded thee. 22. A sound of battle is in the land, and of great destruction. 23. How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken! how is Babylon become a desolation among the nations! 24. I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, O Babylon, and thou wast not aware: thou art found, and also caught, because thou hast striven against the LORD. 25. The LORD hath opened his armoury, and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation: for this is the work of the LORD GOD of hosts in the land of the Chaldeans. 26. Come against her from the utmost border, open her storehouses; cast her up as heaps, and destroy her utterly: let nothing of her be left. 27. Slay all her bullocks; let them go down to the slaughter; wo unto them! for their day is come, the time of their visitation. 28. The voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, the vengeance of his temple. 29. Call together the archers against Babylon: all ye that bend the bow, camp against it round about: let none thereof escape: recompense her according to her work; according to all that she hath done do unto her: for she hath been proud against the LORD, against the Holy One of Israel. 30. Therefore shall

her young men fall in the streets, and all her men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD. 31. Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord GOD of hosts: for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee. 32. And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up: and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him.

Here, 1. The forces are mustered and commissioned to destroy Babylon, and every thing get ready for a descent upon that potent kingdom; *Go up against that land by Merathaim*, the country of the Mardi, that lay part in Assyria, and part in Armenia; and go among the inhabitants of Pekod, another country, (mentioned Ezek. xxiii. 23.) which Cyrus took in his way to Babylon. The forces of Cyrus are called to go up against Babylon, (v. 21.) *to come against her from the utmost border.* Let all come together, for there will be both work and pay enough for them all, v. 26. Distance of place must not be their hindrance from engaging in this work; the archers particularly must be called together against Babylon, v. 29. Thus the LORD hath opened his armoury, (v. 25.) his treasury, (so the word is,) and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation; as great princes fetch out of their magazines and stores all necessary provisions for their armies, when they undertake any great expedition. Media and Persia are now God's armoury, thence he fetches the weapons of his wrath, Cyrus, and his great officers and armies, whom he will make use of for the destruction of Babylon. Note, Great men are but instruments which the great God makes use of to serve his own purposes. He has variety of instruments, has them at command, has armouries ready to be opened according as the occasion is. *This is the work of the LORD God of hosts.* Note, When God has work to do, he will make it appear that he is *God of hosts*, and will not want instruments to do it with.

2. Instructions are given them what to do. In general, *Do according to all that I have commanded thee*, v. 21. It was said of Cyrus, (Isa. xlv. 28.) *He shall perform all my pleasure*, in his expedition against Babylon. They must waste and utterly destroy after them; when they have destroyed once, they must go over them again; or destroy their posterity that should come after them. They must open her storehouses, (v. 26.) rifle her treasures, and turn her artillery against herself; they must cast her up as heaps; let all the wealth and pomp of Babylon be shovelled up in a heap of ruins and rubbish. *Tread her down as heaps*, (so the margin reads it,) and destroy her utterly. See how little account the great God makes of those things which men so much value, and value themselves upon! Their princes and great men, who are fat and bulky, shall fall by the sword, not as men of war in the field of battle, which we call a bed of honour, but as beasts by the butcher's hand; (v. 27.) *Slay all her bullocks*, all her mighty men; let them go down sottishly and insensibly, as an ox to the slaughter. *Wo unto them!* their case is the more sad for the little sense they have of it; *their day is come* to fall, the time when they must be reckoned with, and they are not aware of it.

3. Assurances are given them of success. Let them do what God commands, and they shall accomplish what he threatens. A great destruction shall be made, v. 22. *Babylon shall become a desolation*; (v. 23.) *her young men, and all her men of war, shall be cut off in that day*, that should have been her defence; (v. 30.) *God is against her*,

(v. 31.) he has *laid a snare* for her; (v. 24.) he hath formed this enterprise against her, that she should be surprised as a bird taken in a snare. Cyrus shall, no doubt, prevail, for he fights under God; *God will kindle a fire* in the cities of Babylon; (v. 32.) and who can stand before him when he is angry, or quench the fire that he has kindled?

4. Reasons are given for these severe dealings with Babylon. They that are employed in this war, may, if they please, know the grounds of it, and be satisfied in the justice of it, which it is fit all should be, that are called to such work. (1.) Babylon has been very troublesome, vexatious, and injurious, to all its neighbours; *it has been the hammer of the whole earth*, (v. 23.) beating, beating down, and beating to pieces, all the nations far and near. It has done so long enough; it is time now that it be *cut asunder and broken*. Note, He that is the God of nations will, sooner or later, assert the injured right of nations against those that unjustly and violently invade them. The God of the whole earth will break *the hammer of the whole earth*. (2.) Babylon has bid defiance to God himself; *Thou hast striven against the Lord*, (v. 24.) *hast joined issue with him*, (so the word signifies,) as in law or battle, hast openly opposed him, set up rivals with him, raised rebellion against him; therefore *thou art now found, and caught*, as in a snare. Note, Those that strive against the Lord will soon find themselves over-matched. (3.) Babylon ruined Jerusalem, the holy city, and the holy house there, and must now be called to an account for that. This is the manifesto published in Zion, in the day of Babylon's visitation; it is *the vengeance of the Lord our God, the vengeance of his people*, v. 28. The burning of the temple, and the carrying away of its vessels, were articles in the charge against Babylon, on which greater stress was laid than upon its being *the hammer of the whole earth*; for Zion was *the joy and glory of the whole earth*. Note, Whatever wrong is done to God's church, (his temple in the world,) it will certainly be reckoned for; and no vengeance will be sorer and heavier than *the vengeance of the temple*. (4.) Babylon had been very haughty and insolent, and therefore must have a fall, for it is the glory of God to *look upon those that are proud, and to abase them*, Job xl. 12.) *I am against thee, O thou most proud*, v. 31. *Thou prides*; (so the word is;) and again, v. 32. as proud as pride itself. Note, The pride of men's hearts sets God against them, and ripens them apace for ruin; for *God resists the proud*, and will bring them down. *The most proud shall stumble and fall*; they shall fall not so much by others thrusting them down, as by their own stumbling; for they hold their heads so high, that they never look under their feet, to choose their way, and avoid stumbling-blocks, but walk at all adventures. Babylon's pride must unavoidably be her ruin; for *she has been proud against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel*, (v. 29.) has insulted him in insulting over his people; she has made him her Enemy, and therefore, when she is *fallen, none shall raise her up*, v. 32. Who can help those up whom God will throw down?

33. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together; and all that took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go. 34. Their Redeemer is strong; The LORD of hosts is his name; he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon. 35. A sword is

upon the Chaldeans, saith the LORD, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes, and upon her wise men. 36. A sword is upon the liars; and they shall dote: a sword is upon her mighty men; and they shall be dismayed. 37. A sword is upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her; and they shall become as women: a sword is upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed. 38. A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols. 39. Therefore the wild beasts of the desert, with the wild beasts of the islands, shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. 40. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein. 41. Behold, a people shall come from the north, and a great nation, and many kings shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. 42. They shall hold the bow and the lance; they are cruel, and will not shew mercy: their voice shall roar like the sea, and they shall ride upon horses, every one put in array, like a man to the battle, against thee, O daughter of Babylon. 43. The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them, and his hands waxed feeble; anguish took hold of him, and pangs as of a woman in travail. 44. Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan unto the habitation of the strong; but I will make them suddenly run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me? 45. Therefore hear ye the counsel of the LORD that he hath taken against Babylon, and his purposes that he hath purposed against the land of the Chaldeans; Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out; surely he shall make their habitation desolate with them. 46. At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations.

We have, in these verses,

I. Israel's sufferings, and their deliverance out of those sufferings. God takes notice of the bondage of his people in Babylon, as he did of their bondage in Egypt; he hath surely seen it, and has heard their cry. *Israel and Judah were oppressed together*, v. 33. Those that remained of the captives of the ten tribes, upon the uniting of the kingdoms of Assyria and Chaldea, seemed to have come and

mingled themselves with those of the two tribes, and to have mingled tears with them, so that they were *oppressed together*. They were humble supplicants for their liberty, and that was all; they could not attempt any thing towards it, for *all that took them captives held them fast*, and were too hard for them. But this is their comfort in distress, that, though they are weak, *their Redeemer is strong*; (v. 34. *their Avenger*, so the word signifies;) he that has a right to them, and will claim his right, and make good his claim; he is stronger than their enemies that *hold them fast*; he can overpower all the force that is against them, and put strength into his own people though they are very weak. *The Lord of hosts is his name*, and he will answer to his name, and make it to appear that he is what his people call him, and will be that to them, for which they depend upon him. Note, It is the unspeakable comfort of the people of God, that, though they have hosts against them, they have *the Lord of hosts* for them; and *he shall thoroughly plead their cause*; pleading he shall plead it, plead it with jealousy, plead it effectually, plead it, and carry it, *that he may give rest to the land*, to his people's land, rest from all their enemies round about. This is applicable to all believers, who complain of the dominion of sin and corruption, and of their own weakness and manifold infirmities; let them know that *their Redeemer is strong*, he is able to keep what they commit to him, and he will plead their cause, sin shall not have dominion over them; he will *make them free*, and they shall be *free indeed*; he will give them *rest*, that *rest which remains for the people of God*.

II. Babylon's sin, and their punishment for that sin.

1. The sins they are here charged with are, idolatry and persecution. (1.) They oppressed the people of God, they *held them fast*, and would not let them go; they *opened not the house of his prisoners*, Isa. xiv. 17. This was God's quarrel with them, as of old with Pharaoh; it cost him dear, and yet they would not take warning. *The inhabitants of Babylon must be disquieted*, (v. 34.) because they have disquieted God's people, whose honour and comfort he is jealous for, and therefore will *recompense tribulation to those that trouble them*, as well as rest to them *that are troubled*, 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. (2.) They wronged God himself, and robbed him, giving that glory to others, which is due to him alone; for, (v. 38.) *it is the land of graven images*; all parts of the country abounded with idols, and they were mad upon them, were in love with them, and doted on them, cared not what cost and pains they were at in the worship of them, were unwearied in paying their respects to them, and in all this they were wretchedly infatuated, and acted like men out of their wits; they were carried on in their idolatry without reason or discretion, like men in a perfect fury. The word here used for idols, properly signifies *terrors*, *Enim*, the name given to giants that were formidable, because they made the images of their gods to look frightful, to strike a terror upon fools and children. Their idols were scarecrows, yet they doted on them. Babylon was *the mother of harlots*, (Rev. xvii. 5.) the source of idolatry. Note, It is the maddest thing in the world to make a god of any creature; and those who are proud against the Lord, the true God, are justly given up to strong delusions, to be mad upon idols that cannot profit. But this madness is wickedness, for which sinners will be certainly and severely reckoned with.

2. The judgments of God upon them for these sins are such as will quite lay them waste, and ruin them.

(1.) All that should be their defence and support

shall be cut off by the sword. The Chaldeans had long been God's sword, wherewith he had done execution upon the sinful nations round about; but now, they being as bad as any of them, or worse, a sword is brought upon them, even *upon the inhabitants of Babylon*, (v. 35.) a sword of war; and, as it is in God's hand, sent and directed by him, it is a sword of justice. It shall be, [1.] *Upon their princes*; they shall fall by it, and their dignity, wealth, and power, shall not secure them. [2.] *Upon their wise men*, their philosophers, their statesmen and privy-counsellors; their learning and policy shall neither secure themselves, nor stand the public in any stead. [3.] *Upon their soothsayers and astrologers*, here called *liars*, (v. 36.) for they cheated with their prognostications of peace and prosperity: the sword upon them shall make them dote, so that they shall talk like fools, and be as men that had lost all their wits. Note, God has a sword that can reach the soul and affect the mind, and bring men under spiritual plagues. [4.] *Upon their mighty men*; a sword shall be upon their spirits; if they are not slain, yet *they shall be dismayed*, and shall be no longer *mighty men*; for what stead will their hands stand them in when their hearts fail them? [5.] *Upon their militia*; (v. 37.) the *sword* shall be *upon their horses and chariots*, the invaders shall make themselves masters of all their warlike stores, shall seize *their horses and chariots* for themselves, or destroy them. The troops of other nations, that were in their service, shall be quite disheartened, *the mingled people shall become as weak and timorous as women*. [6.] *Upon their exchequer*; the *sword* shall be *upon her treasures*, which are the sinews of war, and *they shall be robbed*, and made use of by the enemy against them. See what universal destruction the sword makes when it comes with commission!

(2.) The country shall be made desolate; (v. 38.) *The waters shall be dried up*; the water that secures the city. Cyrus drew the river Euphrates into so many channels as made it passable for his army, so that they got with ease to the walls of Babylon, which were thought, having such a river before them, to be inaccessible. The water likewise, that made the country fruitful, shall be *dried up*, so that it shall be turned into barrenness, and shall be no more inhabited by the children of men, but by *the wild beasts of the desert*, v. 39. This was foretold concerning Babylon, Isa. xiii. 19.—22. It shall become like *Sodom and Gomorrah*, v. 40. The same was foretold concerning Edom, ch. xlix. 18. As the Chaldeans had laid Edom waste, so they shall themselves be laid waste.

(3.) The king and kingdom shall be put into the utmost confusion and consternation by the enemies' invading of them, v. 41.—43. All the expressions here used, bespeaking the formidable power of the invaders, the terrors wherewith they should array themselves, and the fright which both court and country should be put into thereby, we met with before, (ch. vi. 22.—24.) concerning the Chaldeans invading the land of Judah. This battle, which is there said to be *against thee, O daughter of Zion*, is here said to be *against thee, O daughter of Babylon*, to intimate that they should be paid in their own coin. God can find out such as shall be for terror and destruction to those that are for terror and destruction to others. And those who have dealt cruelly, and have showed no mercy, may expect to be cruelly dealt with, and to find no mercy. Only there is one difference between these passages; there it is said, *We have heard the fame thereof, and our hands wax feeble*; here it is said, *The king of Babylon has heard the report, and his hands waxed feeble*; which intimates that that proud and daring prince shall, in the day of his distress, be as

weak and dispirited as the meanest Israelites were in the day of their distress.

(4.) That they shall be as much hurt as frightened, for the invader shall *come up like a lion* to tear and destroy, (*v.* 44.) and shall make them and their *habitation desolate*; (*v.* 45.) and the desolation shall be so astonishing, that all the nations about shall be terrified by it, *v.* 46. These three verses we had before, (*ch.* xlix. 19.—21.) in the prophecy of the destruction of Edom, which was accomplished by the Chaldeans, and they are here repeated, *mutatis mutandis—with a few necessary alterations*, in the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, which was to be accomplished upon the Chaldeans, to show that though the distributions of Providence may appear unequal for a time, its retributions will be equal at last; when thou shalt make *an end to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled*, Isa. xxxiii. 1.—Rev. xiii. 10.

CHAP. LI.

The prophet, in this chapter, goes on with the prediction of Babylon's fall, to which other prophets also bare witness. He is very large and lively in describing the foresight God had given him of it, for the encouragement of the pious captives, whose deliverance depended upon it, and was to be the result of it. Here is, I. The record of Babylon's doom, with the particulars of it, intermixed with the grounds of God's controversy with her, many aggravations of her fall, and great encouragements given from thence to the Israel of God, that suffered such hard things by her, *v.* 1.—58. II. The representation and ratification of this, by the throwing of a copy of this prophecy into the river Euphrates, *v.* 59.—64.

1. **T**HUS saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind; 2. And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about. 3. Against *him that bendeth* let the archer bend his bow, and against *him that lifteth himself up in his brigandine*: and spare ye not her young men; destroy ye utterly all her host. 4. Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and *they that are thrust through* in her streets. 5. For Israel *hath not been forsaken*, nor Judah of his God, of the LORD of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel. 6. Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul; he not cut off in her iniquity: for this is the time of the LORD's vengeance; he will render unto her a recompense. 7. Babylon *hath been* a golden cup in the LORD's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. 8. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed. 9. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country; for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up *even* to the skies. 10. The LORD hath brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us de-

clare in Zion the work of the LORD our God. 11. Make bright the arrows, gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple. 12. Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong; set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes: for the LORD hath both devised and done that which he spake against the inhabitants of Babylon. 13. O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, *and* the measure of thy covetousness. 14. The LORD of hosts hath sworn by himself, *saying*, Surely I will fill thee with men as with caterpillars; and they shall lift up a shout against thee. 15. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding. 16. When he uttereth *his voice there is* a multitude of waters in the heavens; and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. 17. Every man is brutish by *his* knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and *there is* no breath in them. 18. They *are* vanity, the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. 19. The Portion of Jacob is not like them; for he is the Former of all things, and *Israel is* the rod of his inheritance; The LORD of hosts is his name. 20. Thou *art* my battle-axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations; and with thee will I destroy kingdoms; 21. And with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider; and with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider; 22. With thee also will I break in pieces man and woman; and with thee will I break in pieces old and young; and with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid; 23. I will also break in pieces with thee the shepherd and his flock; and with thee will I break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke of oxen; and with thee will I break in pieces captains and rulers. 24. And I will render unto Babylon, and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea, all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD. 25. Behold, I *am* against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth; and I will stretch out my hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt moun-

tain. 26. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the LORD. 27. Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz; appoint a captain against her; cause her horses to come up as the rough caterpillars. 28. Prepare against her the nations, with the kings of the Medes, the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion. 29. And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant. 30. The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, they have remained in *their* holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burnt their dwelling-places; her bars are broken. 31. 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. 32. And that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burnt with fire, and the men of war are affrighted. 33. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, The daughter of Babylon *is* like a threshing-floor, *it is* time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come. 34. Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out. 35. The violence done to me and to my flesh *be* upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and, My blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say. 36. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry. 37. And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment, and a hissing without an inhabitant. 38. They shall roar together like lions: they shall yell as lions' whelps. 39. In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the LORD. 40. I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with he-goats. 41. How is Sheshach taken! and how is the praise of the whole earth surprised! how is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations! 42. The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the

multitude of the waves thereof. 43. Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth *any* son of man pass thereby. 44. And I will punish Bel in Babylon; and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him; yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall. 45. My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD. 46. And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land: a rumour shall both come *one* year, and after that in *another* year *shall come* a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler. 47. Therefore, behold, the days come, that I will do judgment upon the graven images of Babylon: and her whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her. 48. Then the heaven and the earth, and all that *is* therein, shall sing for Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith the LORD. 49. As Babylon *hath caused* the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth. 50. Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind. 51. We are confounded, because we have heard reproach: shame hath covered our faces; for strangers are come into the sanctuaries of the LORD's house. 52. Wherefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will do judgment upon her graven images; and through all her land the wounded shall groan. 53. Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, *yet* from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the LORD. 54. A sound of a cry *cometh* from Babylon, and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans: 55. Because the LORD hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the great voice; when her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered: 56. Because the spoiler is come upon her, *even* upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken; every one of their bows is broken: for the Lord God of recompenses shall surely requite. 57. And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise *men*, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name *is* The LORD of hosts. 58. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burnt with fire; and the people shall labour

in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary.

The particulars of this copious prophecy are dispersed and interwoven, and the same things left and returned to so often, that it could not well be divided into parts, but we must endeavour to collect them under their proper heads.

Let us then observe here,

1. An acknowledgment of the great pomp and power that Babylon had been in, and the use that God in his providence had made of it; (v. 7.) *Babylon hath been a golden cist, a rich and glorious empire, a golden city*, (Isa. xiv. 4.) *a head of gold*, (Dan. ii. 38.) filled with all good things, as a cup with wine; nay, she had been a *golden cup in the Lord's hand*, he had in a particular manner filled and favoured her with blessings, he had made the earth *drunk with this cist*; some were intoxicated with her pleasures, and debauched by her; others intoxicated with her terrors, and destroyed by her. In both senses, the New Testament Babylon is said to have made the kings of the earth drunk, Rev. xvii. 4.—xviii. 3. Babylon had also been God's *battle-axe*; it was so at this time, when Jeremiah prophesied, and was likely to be yet more so, v. 20. The forces of Babylon were God's *weapons of war*, tools in his hand, with which he brake in pieces, and knocked down, *nations and kingdoms, horses and chariots*, which are so much the strength of kingdoms; (v. 21.) *men and women, young and old*, with which kingdoms are replenished; (v. 22.) *the shepherd and his flock, the husbandman and his oxen*, with which kingdoms are maintained and supplied, v. 23. Such havoc as this the Chaldeans had made, when God employed them as instruments of his wrath for the chastising of the nations; and yet now Babylon herself must fall. Note, Those that have carried all before them a great while, will yet at length meet with their match, and their day also will come to fall, the rod will itself be thrown into the fire at last; nor can any think it will exempt them from God's judgments, that they have been instrumental in executing his judgments on others.

2. A just complaint made of Babylon, and a charge drawn up against her by the Israel of God. (1.) They are complained of for their incorrigible wickedness; (v. 9.) *We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed*. The people of God that were captives among them, endeavoured, according to the instructions given them, (Jer. x. 11.) to convince them of the folly of their idolatry, but they could not do it; still the Babylonians doted as much as ever upon their graven images, and therefore the Israelites resolve to quit them, and go to their own country. Yet some understand this as spoken by the forces they had hired for their assistance, declaring that they had done their best to save her from ruin, but that it was all to no purpose, and therefore they had as good go home to their respective countries; for *her judgment reaches unto heaven*, and it is in vain to withstand it, or think to avert it. (2.) They are complained of for their inveterate malice against Israel; other nations had been hardly used by the Chaldeans, but Israel only complains to God of it, and with confidence appeals to him, (v. 34, 35.) *"The king of Babylon has devoured me, and crushed me, and never thought he could do enough to ruin me; he has emptied me of all that was valuable, has swallowed me up, as a dragon or whale swallows up the little fish by shoals; he has filled his belly, filled his treasures, with my delicacies, with all my pleasant things, and has cast me out, cast me away as a vessel in which there is no pleasure; and now let them be accountable for all this."* Zion and Jerusalem shall say, "Let the violence done to me and my children, that are my

own flesh, and pieces of myself, and all the blood of my people, which they have shed like water, be upon them; let the guilt of it lie upon them, and let it be required at their hand." Note, Ruin is not far off from those that lie under the guilt of wrong done to God's people.

3. Judgment given upon this appeal by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, on behalf of Israel against Babylon. He *sits in the throne judging right*, is ready to receive complaints, and answers, (v. 36.) *"I will plead thy cause, leave it with me, I will in due time plead it effectually, and take vengeance for thee"*; and every drop of Jerusalem's blood shall be accounted for with interest." Israel and Judah seem to have been neglected and forgotten, but God has an eye to them, v. 5. It is true, *their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel*, they were a provoking people, and their sins were a great offence to God, as a holy God, and as their God, their Holy One; and therefore he justly delivered them up into the hands of their enemies, and might justly have abandoned them, and left them to perish in their hands; but God deals better with them than they deserve, and, notwithstanding their iniquities and his severities, *Israel is not forsaken*, is not cast off, though he be cast out, but is owned and looked after by his God, by the Lord of hosts; God is his God still, and will act for him as the Lord of hosts, a God of power. Note, Though God's people may have broken his laws, and fallen under his rebukes, yet it does not therefore follow that they are thrown out of covenant; but God's care of them and love to them will flourish again, Ps. lxxxix. 30, 53. The Chaldeans thought they should never be called to an account for what they had done against God's Israel; but there is a time fixed for vengeance, v. 6. We cannot expect it should come sooner than the time fixed, but then it will come; he *will render unto Babylon a recompense*, for the avenging of Israel is the vengeance of the Lord, who espouses their cause; it is the *vengeance of his temple*, (v. 11.) as before, ch. l. 28. *The Lord of recompenses, the God to whom vengeance belongs, will surely requite*, (v. 56.) will pay them home; he *will render unto Babylon all the evil they have done in Zion*, (v. 24.) he will return it in the sight of his people; they shall have the satisfaction to see their cause pleaded with jealousy; they shall not only live to see those judgments brought upon Babylon, but they shall plainly see them to be the punishment of the wrong they have done to Zion; and man may see it, and say, *Verily there is a God that judges in the earth*: for just as *Babylon has caused the slain of Israel to fall*, has not only slain those that were found in arms, but all without distinction; even *all the land*, (almost all were put to the sword,) so *at Babylon shall fall*, the slain not only of the city, but of *all the country*, v. 49. Cyrus shall measure to the Chaldeans the same that they measured to the Jews, so that every observer may discern that God is recompensing them for what they did against his people; but Zion's children shall in a particular manner triumph in it; (v. 10.) *"The Lord has brought forth our righteousness"*, he has appeared in our behalf against those that dealt unjustly with us, and has righted us; he has also made it to appear that he is reconciled to us, and that we are yet in his eyes a *righteous nation*. Let it therefore be spoken of to his praise, *Come and let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God*, that others may be invited to join with us in praising him."

4. A declaration of the greatness and sovereignty of that God who espouses Zion's cause, and undertakes to reckon with this proud and potent enemy; (v. 14.) *It is the Lord of hosts* that had said it, that has *sworn it*, has *sworn it by himself*, for he could

swear by no greater, that he will fill Babylon with vast and incredible numbers of the enemy's forces, will *fill it with men as with caterpillars*, that shall overpower it with multitudes, and need only to *lift up a shout* against it, for that shall be so terrible as to dispirit all the inhabitants, and make them an easy prey to this numerous army. But who, and where, is he that can break so powerful a kingdom as Babylon? The prophet gives an account of him from the description he had formerly given of him, and of his sovereignty and victory over all pretenders, (Jer. x. 12.—16.) which was there intended for the conviction of the Babylonian idolaters, and the confirmation of God's Israel in the faith and worship of the God of Israel; and it is here repeated, to show that God will convince those by his judgments, who would not be convinced by his word, that he is *God over all*. Let not any doubt but that he who has determined to destroy Babylon, is able to make his words good, for, (1.) He is the God that made the world, (v. 15.) and therefore nothing is too hard for him to do; it is in his name that our help stands, and on him our hope is built. (2.) He has the command of all the creatures that he has made; (v. 16.) his providence is a continued creation; he has *wind and rain* at his disposal; if he speak the word, there is a *multitude of waters in the heavens*; and it is a wonder how they hang there, fed by *vapours out of the earth*; and it is a wonder how they ascend thence. *Lightnings and rain* seem contraries, as fire and water, and yet they are produced together; and the wind, which seems arbitrary in its motions, and we *know not whence it comes*, is yet, we are sure, brought *out of his treasures*. (3.) The idols that oppose the accomplishment of his word, are a mere sham, and their worshippers brutish people, v. 17, 18. The idols are falsehood, they are vanity, they are *the work of errors*; when they come to be visited, to be examined and inquired into, they perish, their reputation sinks, and they appear to be nothing; and those *that make them are like unto them*. But between the God of Israel and these gods of the heathen there is no comparison; (v. 19.) *The portion of Jacob is not like them*; the God who speaks this, and will do it, is the *Former of all things*, and the *Lord of all hosts*, and therefore can do what he will; and there is a near relation between him and his people, for he is *their Portion*, and they are his; they put a confidence in him as their Portion, and he is pleased to take a complacency in them, and a particular care of them, as the *lot of his inheritance*; and therefore he will do what is best for them. The repetition of these things here, which were said before, intimates both the certainty and the importance of them, and obliges us to take special notice of them; *God hath spoken once, yea, twice have we heard this, that power belongs to God*; power to destroy the most formidable enemies of his church; and if God thus *speaks once, yea, twice*, we are inexcusable if we do not perceive it, and attend to it.

5. A description of the instruments that are to be employed in this service. God has *raised up the spirits of the kings of the Medes*, (v. 11.) Darius and Cyrus, who come against Babylon by a divine instinct; for *God's device is against Babylon to destroy it*; they do it, but God devised it, he designed it; they are but accomplishing his purpose, and acting as he directed. Note, God's counsel shall stand, and according to it all hearts shall move. Those whom God employs against Babylon are compared (v. 1.) to a *destroying wind*, which either by its coldness blasts the fruits of the earth, or by its fierceness blows down all before it; this wind is *brought out of God's treasures*, (v. 16.) and it is here said to be *raised up against them that dwell in the midst of the Chaldeans*, those of other nations

that inhabit among them, and are incorporated with them. The Chaldeans rise up against God by falling down before idols, and against them God will raise up destroyers, for he will be too hard for them that contest with him. These enemies are compared to fanners, (v. 2.) who shall *drive them away, as chaff* is driven away by the fan. The Chaldeans had been fanners to winnow God's people, (ch. xv. 7.) and to empty them, and now they shall themselves be in like manner despoiled and dispersed.

6. An ample commission given them to destroy, and lay all waste. Let them *bend their bow* against the archers of the Chaldeans, (v. 3.) and *not spare her young men*, but *utterly destroy them*, for the Lord has *both devised and done what he spake against Babylon*, v. 12. This may animate the instruments he employs, by assuring them of success; the methods they take are such as God has devised, and therefore they shall surely prosper; what he has spoken shall be done, for he himself will do it; and therefore let all necessary preparations be made; *these they are called to*, v. 27, 28. Let a *standard be set up*, under which to enlist soldiers for this expedition: *let a trumpet be blown* to call men together to it, and animate them in it; let the nations, out of which Cyrus's army is to be raised, prepare their recruits; let the kingdoms of Ararat and Minni, and Ashkenaz, of Armenia, both the higher and the lower, and of Ascania, about Phrygia and Bithynia, send in their quota of men for this service; let general officers be appointed, and the cavalry advance; let the horses come up in *great numbers*, as the *caterpillars*, and come, like them, leaping and pawing in the valley; let them lay the country waste, as *caterpillars* do, (Joel i. 4.) especially rough caterpillars; let the kings and captains prepare nations against Babylon, for the service is great, and there is occasion for many hands to be employed in it.

7. The weakness of the Chaldeans, and their inability to make head against this threatening, destroying force. When God employed them against other nations, they had spirit and strength to act offensively, and went on with admirable resolution, conquering and to conquer; but now that it comes to their turn to be reckoned with, all their might and courage are gone, their hearts fail them, and none of all their men of might and mettle have found their hands to act so much as defensively. They are called upon here to prepare for action, but it is ironically, and in an upbraiding way; (v. 11.) *Make bright the arrows*, which are grown rusty through disuse; *gather the shields*, which in a long time of peace and security have been scattered, and thrown out of the way; (v. 12.) *Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon*, upon the towers on those walls, to summon all that owed suit and service to that mother-city, now to come in to her assistance. Let them make the watch as strong as they can, and appoint the sentinels to their respective posts, and prepare ambushes for the reception of the enemy. This intimates that they would be found very secure and remiss, and would need to be thus quickened; (and they were so to that degree, that they were in the midst of their revels when the city was taken;) but that all their preparations should be to no purpose; who will may call them to it, but they shall have no heart to come at the call, v. 29. *The whole land shall tremble and sorrow*, a universal consternation shall seize upon them, for they shall see both the irresistible arm, and the irreversible counsel and decree, of God against them; they shall see that God is making *Babylon a desolation*, and therein is performing what he has purposed; and then *the mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight*, v. 30. God having taken away their strength

and spirit, so that they have *remained in their holds*, not daring so much as to peep forth, the might both of their hearts and of their hands fails, they *become as timorous as women*, so that the enemy has, without any resistance, *burnt her dwelling-places, and broken her bars*. It is to the same purport with v. 56.—58. When the spoiler comes upon Babylon, her mighty men, who should make head against him, are immediately taken, their weapons of war fail them, *every one of their bows is broken*, and stands them in no stead; their politics fail them, they call councils of war, but their princes and captains, who sit in council to concert measures for the common safety, are made drunk, they are as men intoxicated through stupidity or despair, they can form no right notions of things, they stagger, and are unsteady in their counsels and resolves, and dash one against another, and, like drunken men, fall out among themselves; at length they *sleep a perpetual sleep*, and never awake from their wine, the wine of God's wrath, for it is to them an opiate that lays them into a fatal lethargy. The *walls of their city* fail them, v. 58. When the enemy had found ways to ford Euphrates, which was thought impassable, yet surely, think they, the walls are impregnable, they are *the broad walls of Babylon*, or, as the margin reads it, *the walls of broad Babylon*; the compass of the city, within the walls, was 385 furlongs, some say 480, that is, about sixty miles; the walls were 200 cubits high, and 50 cubits broad, so that two chariots might easily pass by one another upon them. Some say that there was a threefold wall about the inner city, and the like upon the outer; and that the stones of the wall, being laid in pitel, instead of mortar, (Gen. xi. 3.) were scarcely separable; and yet these shall be *utterly broken*, and the *high gates and towers shall be burnt*, and the people that are employed in the defence of the city shall *labour in vain, in the fire*, they shall quite tire themselves, but shall do no good.

8. The destruction that shall be made of Babylon by these invaders. (1.) It is a certain destruction, the doom is past, and it cannot be reversed; a divine power is engaged against it, which cannot be resisted; (v. 8.) *Babylon is fallen and destroyed*, is as sure to fall, to fall into destruction, as if it were fallen and destroyed already; though, when Jeremiah prophesied this, and many a year after, it was in the height of its power and greatness. God declares, God appears against Babylon; (v. 25.) *Behold, I am against thee*, and those cannot stand long whom God is against; he will *stretch out his hand upon it*, a hand which no creature can bear the weight of, or withstand the force of. It is his purpose which shall be performed, that *Babylon must be a desolation*, v. 29. (2.) It is a righteous destruction; Babylon has made herself meet for it, and therefore cannot fail to meet with it. For, (v. 25.) *Babylon has been a destroying mountain*, very lofty and bulky as a mountain, and *destroying all the earth*, as the stones that are tumbled from high mountains spoil the grounds about them; but now it shall itself be *rolled down from its rocks*, which were as the foundations on which it stood; it shall be levelled, its pomp and power broken. It is now a burning mountain, like *Ætna* and the other volcanoes, that throw out fire, to the terror of all about them; but it shall be a burnt mountain, it shall at length have consumed itself, and shall remain a heap of ashes—so will this world be at the end of time. Again, (v. 33.) *Babylon is like a threshing-floor*, in which the people of God have been long threshed, as sheaves in the floor; but now the time is come that she shall herself be threshed, and her sheaves in her; her princes and great men, and all her inhabitants, shall be beaten in their own land, as in the threshing-floor. The threshing-floor is

prepared, Babylon is by sin made meet to be a seat of war, and her people, like corn in harvest, are ripe for destruction, Rev. xiv. 15. Mic. iv. 12. (3.) It is an unavoidable destruction. Babylon seems to be well fenced and fortified against it; *she dwells upon many waters*; (v. 13.) the situation of her country is such, that it seems inaccessible, it is so surrounded, and the march of an enemy into it so embarrassed, by rivers. In allusion to this, the New Testament Babylon is said to *sit upon many waters*, to rule over many nations, as the other Babylon did, Rev. xvii. 15. *Babylon is abundant in treasures*; and yet *thine end is come*, and neither thy waters nor thy wealth shall secure thee. This end that comes shall be *the measure of thy covetousness*, it shall be the stint of thy gettings, it shall set bounds to thine ambition and avarice, which otherwise had been boundless. God, by the destruction of Babylon, said to its proud waves, *Hitherto shall ye come, and no further*. Note, If men will not set a measure to their covetousness by wisdom and grace, God will set a measure to it by his judgments. Babylon, thinking herself very safe and very great, was very proud; but she will be deceived, v. 53. *Though Babylon should mount her walls and palaces up to heaven*, and though (because what is high is apt to totter) she should take care to *fortify the height of her strength*, yet all will not do, God will send spoilers against her, that shall break through her strength, and bring down her height. (4.) It is a gradual destruction, which, if they had pleased, they might have foreseen, and had warning of; for, (v. 46.) *A rumour will come one year*, that Cyrus is making vast preparations for war, and *after that, in another year, shall come a rumour*, that his design is upon Babylon, and he is steering his course that way; so that when he was a great way off, they might have sent, and desired conditions of peace; but they were too proud, too secure, to do that, and their hearts were hard-ned to their destruction. (5.) Yet, when it comes, it is a surprising destruction; *Babylon is suddenly fallen*; (v. 8.) the destruction comes upon them when they did not think of it, and is perfected in a little time, as that of the New Testament *Babylon in one hour*, Rev. xviii. 17. The king of Babylon, who should have been observing the approaches of the enemy, was himself at such a distance from the place where the attack was made, that it was a great while ere he had notice that the city was taken; so that they who were posted near the place, sent one messenger, one courier, after another, with advice of it, v. 31. The foot-posts shall meet at the court from several quarters with this intelligence to the king of Babylon, that his *city is taken at one end*, and there is nothing to obstruct the progress of the conquerors, but they will be at the other end quickly. They are to tell him that the enemy has *seized the passes*, (v. 32.) the forts or blockades upon the river; and that having got over the river, they set fire to the reeds on the river-side to alarm and terrify the city, so that all the men of war are affrighted, and have thrown down their arms, and surrendered at discretion. The messengers come, like Job's, one upon the heels of another, with these tidings, which are immediately confirmed with a witness, by the enemies being in the palace, and slaying the king himself, Dan. v. 30. That profane feast which they were celebrating at the very time when their city was taken, which was both an evidence of their strange security, and a great advantage to the enemy, seems here to be referred to; (v. 38, 39.) *They shall roar together like lions*, as men in their revels do, when the wine is got into their heads; they call it *singing*, but in scripture-language, and in the language of sober men, it is called *yelling like lions' whelps*. It is probable that

they were drinking confusion to Cyrus and his army with loud huzzas; Well, says God, in their heat, when they are inflamed, (Isa. v. 11.) and their heads are hot with hard drinking, I will make their feasts, I will give them their portion; they have passed their cup round, now the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto them, (Hab. ii. 15, 16.) a cup of fury, which shall make them drunk, that they may rejoice, or rather that they may revel it, and sleep a perpetual sleep; let them be as merry as they can with that bitter cup, but it shall lay them to sleep, never to wake more; (as v. 57.) for on that night, in the midst of the jollity, was Belshazzar slain. (6.) It is to be a universal destruction, God will make thorough work of it; for, as he will perform what he has purposed, so he will perfect what he has begun. *The slain shall fall in great abundance throughout the land of the Chaldeans, multitudes shall be thrust through in her streets, v. 4.* They are brought down like lambs to the slaughter, (v. 40.) in such great numbers, so easily; and the enemies make no more of killing them than the butcher does of killing lambs. The strength of the enemy, and their invading of them, are here compared to an irruption and inundation of waters; (v. 42.) *The sea is come up upon Babylon, which, when it has once broken through its bounds, there is no fence against, so that she is covered with the multitude of its waves, overpowered by a numerous army; her cities then become a desolation, an uninhabited, uncultivated desert, v. 43.* (7.) It is a destruction that shall reach the gods of Babylon, the idols and images, and fall with a particular weight upon them. In token that the whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall, and that throughout all the country the wounded shall groan, *I will do judgment upon her graven images, v. 47, 52.* All must needs perish, if their gods perish, from whom they expect protection. Though the invaders are themselves idolaters, yet they shall destroy the images and temples of the gods of Babylon, as an earnest of the abolishing of all counterfeit deities. Bel was the principal idol that the Babylonians worshipped, and therefore that is by name here marked for destruction; (v. 44.) *I will punish Bel, that great devourer, that image to which such abundance of sacrifices are offered, and such rich spoils dedicated, and to whose temple there is such a vast resort; he shall disgorge what he has so greedily regaled himself with; God will bring forth out of his temple all the wealth laid up there, Job xx. 15.* His altars shall be forsaken, none shall regard him any more, and so that idol which was thought to be a wall to Babylon, shall fall, and fail them. (8.) It shall be a final destruction; you may take balm for her pain, but in vain; she that would not be healed by the word of God, shall not be healed by his providence, v. 8, 9. *Babylon shall become heaps, (v. 37.) and to complete its infamy, no use shall be made even of the ruins of Babylon, so execrable shall they be, and attended with such ill omens! v. 26.* *They shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations.* People shall not care for having any thing to do with Babylon, or whatever belonged to it. Or it denotes that there shall be nothing left in Babylon, on which to ground any hopes or attempts of raising it into a kingdom again; for, as it follows here, it shall be desolate for ever. St. Jerome says, that in his time, though the ruins of Babylon's wall were to be seen, yet the ground enclosed by them was a forest of wild beasts.

9. Here is a call to God's people to go out of Babylon. It is their wisdom, when ruin is approaching, to quit the city, and retire into the country; (v. 6.) *"Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and get into some remote corner, that you may save your lives, and may not be cut off in her iniquity."* When

God's judgments are abroad, it is good to get as far as we can from those against whom they are levelled, as Israel from the tents of Korah. This agrees with the advice Christ gave his disciples, with reference to the destruction of Jerusalem; *Let them which be in Judea, flee to the mountains, Matth. xxiv. 16.* It is their wisdom to get out of the midst of Babylon, lest they be involved, if not in her ruins, yet in her fears; (v. 45, 46.) *Lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land.* Though God has told them that Cyrus should be their deliverer, and Babylon's destruction their deliverance, yet they had been told also, that in the peace thereof they should have peace, and therefore the alarms given to Babylon would put them into a fright, and perhaps they might not have faith and consideration enough to suppress these fears; for which reason they are here advised to get out of the hearing of the alarms. Note, Those who have not grace enough to keep their temper in temptation, should have wisdom enough to keep out of the way of temptation. But this is not all; it is not only their wisdom to quit the city when the ruin is approaching, but it is their duty to quit the country too, when the ruin is accomplished, and they are set at liberty by the pulling down of the prison over their heads. This they are told, v. 50, 51. *"Ye Israelites, who have escaped the sword of the Chaldeans your oppressors, and of the Persians their destroyers, now that the year of release is come, go away, stand not still, hasten to your own country again, however you may be comfortably seated in Babylon, for this is not your rest, but Canaan is."* (1.) He puts them in mind of the inducements they had to return; *"Remember the Lord afar off, his presence with you now, though you are here afar off from your native soil; his presence with your fathers formerly in the temple, though you are now afar off from the ruins of it."* Note, Wherever we are, in the greatest depths, at the greatest distances, we may and must remember the Lord our God; and in the time of the greatest fears and hopes it is seasonable to remember the Lord. *"And let Jerusalem come into your mind; though it be now in ruins, yet favour its dust, (Ps. cii. 14.) though few of you ever saw it, yet believe the report you have had concerning it, from those that wept when they remembered Zion; and think of Jerusalem until you come up to a resolution to make the best of your way thither."* Note, When the city of our solemnities is out of sight, yet it must not be out of mind: and it will be of great use to us, in our journey through this world, to let the heavenly Jerusalem come often into our mind. (2.) He takes notice of the discouragement which the returning captives labour under; (v. 51.) being reminded of Jerusalem, they cry out, *"We are confounded, we cannot bear the thought of it, shame covers our faces at the mention of it, for we have heard of the reproach of the sanctuary, that it is profaned and ruined by strangers; how can we think of it with any pleasure?"* To which he answers, (v. 52.) that the God of Israel will now triumph over the gods of Babylon, and so that reproach will be for ever rolled away. Note, The believing prospect of Jerusalem's recovery will keep us from being ashamed of Jerusalem's ruins.

10. Here is the diversified feeling excited by Babylon's fall, and it is the same that we have with respect to the *New Testament Babylon*, Rev. xviii. 9, 19. (1.) Some shall lament the destruction of Babylon. *There is the sound of a cry, a great outcry coming from Babylon, (v. 54.) lamenting this great destruction, the voice of mourning, because the Lord has destroyed the voice of the multitude, that great voice of mirth, which used to be heard in Babylon, v. 55.* We are told what they shall say in their lamentations; (v. 41.) *How is Sheshach taken, and*

how are we mistaken concerning her! How is that city surprised, and become an *astonishment among the nations*, that was the praise, and glory, and admiration, of the whole earth! See how that may fall into a general contempt, which has been universally cried up! (2.) Yet some shall *rejoice* in Babylon's fall, not as it is the misery of their fellow-creatures, but as it is the manifestation of the righteous judgment of God, and as it opens the way for the release of God's captives; upon these accounts *the heaven and the earth, and all that is in both, shall sing for Babylon*; (v. 48.) the church in heaven and the church on earth shall give to God the glory of his righteousness, and take notice of it with thankfulness to his praise. Babylon's ruin is Zion's praise.

59. The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Ne-riah, the son of Maaseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah into Babylon, in the fourth year of his reign. And *this Seraiah was a quiet prince*. 60. So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, *even all these words that are written against Babylon*. 61. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words, 62. Then shalt thou say, O LORD, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever. 63. And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, *that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates*: 64. And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her, and they shall be weary. Thus far *are the words of Jeremiah*.

We have been long attending the judgment of Babylon, in this and the foregoing chapter; now here we have the conclusion of that whole matter.

1. A copy is taken of this prophecy, it should seem, by Jeremiah himself, for Baruch his scribe is not mentioned here; (v. 60.) *Jeremiah wrote in a book all these words that are here written against Babylon*. He received this notice, that he might give it to all whom it might concern. It is of great advantage both to the propagating, and to the perpetuating, of the word of God, to have it written, and to have copies taken of the law, prophets, and epistles.

2. It is sent to Babylon, to the captives there, by the hand of Seraiah, who went there attendant on, or ambassador for, king Zedekiah, *in the fourth year of his reign, v. 59. He went with Zedekiah, or, as the margin reads it, on the behalf of Zedekiah, into Babylon*. The character given of him is observable, That *this Seraiah was a quiet prince*, a prince of rest; he was in honour and power, but not, as most of the princes then were, hot and heady, making parties, and heading factions, and driving things furiously; he was of a calm temper, studied the things that made for peace, endeavoured to preserve a good understanding between the king his master and the king of Babylon, and to keep his master from rebelling; he was no persecutor of God's prophets, but a moderate man. Zedekiah was happy in the choice of such a man to be his en-

voy to the king of Babylon, and Jeremiah might safely intrust such a man with his errand too. Note, It is the real honour of great men to be quiet men, and it is the wisdom of princes to put such into places of trust.

3. Seraiah is desired to read it to his countrymen that were already gone into captivity. *"When thou shalt come to Babylon, and shalt see what a magnificent place it is, how large a city, how strong, how rich, and how well fortified, and shalt therefore be tempted to think, Surely it will stand for ever;"* (as the disciples, when they observed the buildings of the temple, concluded that nothing would *throw them down* but the end of the world, Matth. xxiv. 13.) *"then thou shalt read all these words to thyself, and thy particular friends, for their encouragement in their captivity: let them with an eye of faith see to the end of these threatening powers, and comfort themselves and one another herewith."*

4. He is directed to make a solemn protestation of the divine authority and unquestionable certainty of that which he had read; (v. 62.) *Then thou shalt look up to God, and say, O Lord, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off*. This is like the angel's protestation concerning the destruction of the New Testament Babylon; *These are the true sayings of God. These words are true and faithful*, Rev. xix. 9.—xxi. 5. Though Seraiah sees Babylon flourishing, having read this prophecy, he must foresee Babylon falling; and by virtue of it, must curse its habitation, though it be *taking root*; (Job v. 3.) *"O Lord, thou hast spoken against this place, and I believe what thou hast spoken, that, as thou knowest every thing, so thou canst do every thing. Thou hast passed sentence upon Babylon, and it shall be executed. Thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, and therefore we will neither envy its pomp, nor fear its power."* When we see what this world is, how glittering its shows are, and how flattering its proposals, let us read in the book of the Lord that its *fashion passes away*, and it shall shortly be *cut off*, and be *desolate for ever*, and we shall learn to look upon it with a holy contempt. Observe here, When we have been reading the word of God, it becomes us to direct to him whose word it is, an humbling, believing acknowledgment of the truth, equity, and goodness, of what we have read.

5. He must then tie a stone to the book, and throw it into the midst of the river Euphrates, as a confirming sign of the things contained in it, saying, *"Thus shall Babylon sink, and not rise; for they shall be weary, they shall perfectly succumb, as men tired with a burthen, under the load of the evil that I will bring upon them, which they shall never shake off, or get from under, v. 63, 64. In the sign, it was the stone that sunk the book, which otherwise would have swam, but in the thing signified, it was rather the book that sunk the stone; it was the divine sentence passed upon Babylon in this prophecy, that sunk that city, which seemed as firm as a stone. The fall of the New Testament Babylon was represented by something like this, but much more magnificent; (Rev. xviii. 21.) A mighty angel cast a great millstone into the sea, saying, Thus shall Babylon fall. Those that sink under the weight of God's wrath and curse, sink irrecoverably. The last words of the chapter seal up the vision and prophecy of this book; Thus far are the words of Jeremiah. Not that this prophecy against Babylon was the last of his prophecies, for it was dated in the fourth year of Zedekiah, (v. 59.) long before he finished his testimony; but this is recorded last of his prophecies, because it was to be last accomplished of all his prophecies against the Gentiles, ch. xlv. 1. And the chapter which remains is purely historical, and, as some think, was added by some other hand*

CHAP. LII.

History is the best expositor of prophecy; and therefore, for the better understanding the prophecies of this book, which relate to the destruction of Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah, we are here furnished with an account of that sad event. It is much the same with the history we had, 2 Kings xxiv. 25. and many of the particulars we had before in that book, but the matter is here repeated, and put together, to give light to the book of the *Lamentations*, which follows next, and to serve as a key to it. That article in the close, concerning the advancement of Jehoiachin in his captivity, which happened after Jeremiah's time, gives colour to their conjecture, who suppose that this chapter was not written by Jeremiah himself, but by some man divinely inspired among those in captivity, for a constant memorandum to those who in Babylon preferred Jerusalem above their chief joy. In this chapter, we have, I. The bad reign of Zedekiah, very bad in regard both of sin and of punishment, v. 1. . 3. II. The besieging and taking of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, v. 4. . 7. III. The severe usage which Zedekiah and the princes met with, v. 8. . 11. IV. The destruction of the temple and the city, v. 12. . 14. V. The captivity of the people, (v. 15, 16.) and the numbers of those that were carried away into captivity, v. 28. . 30. VI. The carrying off the plunder of the temple, v. 17. . 23. VII. The slaughter of the priests, and some other great men, in cold blood, v. 24. . 27. VIII. The better days which king Jehoiachin lived to see in the latter end of his time, after the death of Nebuchadrezzar, v. 31. . 34.

I. **Z**EDEKIAH *was* one and twenty years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name *was* Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 2. And he did *that which was* evil in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. 3. For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, till he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. 4. And it came to pass, in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, *that* Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about. 5. So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. 6. And in the fourth month, in the ninth *day* of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land. 7. Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the gate between the two walls, which *was* by the king's garden; (now the Chaldeans *were* by the city round about;) and they went by the way of the plain. 8. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him. 9. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah, in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him. 10. And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Ju-

dah in Riblah. 11. Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.

This narrative begins no higher than the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, though there were two captivities before, one in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the other in the first of Jeconiah; but, probably, it was drawn up by some of those that were carried away with Zedekiah, as a reproach to themselves for imagining that they should not go into captivity after their brethren, with which hopes they had long flattered themselves. We have here,

1. God's just displeasure against Judah and Jerusalem for their sin, v. 3. His anger was against them to that degree, that he determined to *cast them out from his presence*, his favourable, gracious presence; as a father, when he is extremely angry with an undutiful son, bids him get out of his presence. He expelled them from that good land that had such tokens of his presence in providential bounty, and that holy city and temple that had such tokens of his presence in covenant-grace and love. Note, Those that are banished from God's ordinances have reason to complain that they are in some degree *cast out of his presence*; yet none are cast out from God's gracious presence, but those that by sin have first thrown themselves out of it. This fruit of sin we should therefore deprecate above any thing, as David, (Ps. li. 11.) *Cast me not away from thy presence*.

2. Zedekiah's bad conduct and management, to which God left him, in displeasure against the people, and for which God punished him, in displeasure against him. Zedekiah was arrived at years of discretion when he came to the throne; he *was* 21 years old; (v. 1.) he was none of the worst of the kings, (we never read of his idolatries,) yet his character is, that he *did evil in the eyes of the Lord*, for he did not do the good he should have done. But that evil deed of his, which did in a special manner hasten his destruction, was, his *rebelliousness against the king of Babylon*, which was both his sin and his folly, and brought ruin upon his people, not only meritoriously, but efficiently. God was greatly displeased with him for his perfidious dealing with the king of Babylon; (as we find, Ezek. xvii. 15, &c.) and because he was angry at Judah and Jerusalem, he put him into the hand of his own counsels, to do that foolish thing which proved fatal to him and his kingdom.

3. The possession which the Chaldeans at length gained of Jerusalem, after eighteen months' siege. They sat down before it, and blocked it up, in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, in the tenth month, (v. 4.) and made themselves masters of it in the *eleventh year in the fourth month*, v. 6. In remembrance of these two steps towards their ruin, while they were in captivity, they kept *a fast in the fourth month and a fast in the tenth*; (Zech. viii. 19.) that in the *fifth month* was in remembrance of the burning of the temple, and that in the *seventh* of the murder of Gedaliah. We may easily imagine, or rather cannot imagine, what a sad time it was with Jerusalem, during this year and half that it was besieged, when all provisions were cut off from coming to them, and they were ever and anon alarmed by the attacks of the enemy, and being obstinately resolved to hold out to the last extremity, nothing remained but a *certain fearful looking for of judgment*. That which disabled them to hold out, and yet could not prevail with them to capitulate, was, the *famine in the city*; (v. 6.) there was *no bread for the people of the land*, so that the soldiers could not make

good their posts, but were rendered wholly unserviceable; and then no wonder that *the city was broken up*, v. 7. Walls, in such a case, will not hold out long without men, any more than men without walls; nor will both together stand people in any stead without God and his protection.

4. The inglorious retreat of the king and his mighty men. They got out of the city *by night*, (v. 7.) and made the best of their way, I know not whither, nor perhaps they themselves; but the king was overtaken by the pursuers *in the plains of Jericho*, and his guards dispersed, and all his army *scattered from him*, v. 8. His fright was not *causeless*, for where there is guilt there will be fear in time of danger. But his flight was *fruitless*, for there is no escaping of the judgments of God; they will *come upon the sinner*, and will *overtake him*, let him flee where he will; (Deut. xxviii. 15.) and these judgments particularly that are here executed, were there threatened, v. 52, 53, &c.

5. The sad doom past upon Zedekiah by the king of Babylon, and immediately put in execution. He treated him as a rebel, *gave judgment upon him*, v. 9. One cannot think of it without the utmost vexation and regret, that a king, a king of Judah, a king of the house of David, should be arraigned as a criminal at the bar of this heathen king. But he *humbled not himself before Jeremiah* the prophet; therefore God thus humbled him. Pursuant to the sentence passed upon him by the haughty conqueror, *his sons were slain before his eyes*, and all the *princes of Judah*; (v. 10.) then *his eyes were put out*, and he was *bound in chains*, carried in triumph to Babylon; perhaps they made sport with him as they did with Samson when his eyes were put out; however, he was condemned to perpetual imprisonment, wearing out the remainder of his *life* (I cannot say his *days*, for he saw day no more) in darkness and misery; he was kept in prison till the *day of his death*, but had some honour done him at his funeral, ch. xxxiv. 5. Jeremiah had often told him what it would come to, but he would not take warning when he might have prevented it.

12. Now in the fifth month, in the tenth day of the month, (which was the nineteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon,) came Nebuzar-adan captain of the guard, which served the king of Babylon, into Jerusalem, 13. And burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great men, burnt he with fire. 14. And all the army of the Chaldeans, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down all the walls of Jerusalem round about. 15. Then Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive certain of the poor of the people, and the residue of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the multitude. 16. But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left certain of the poor of the land, for vine-dressers and for husbandmen. 17. Also the pillars of brass that were in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brazen sea that was in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans brake, and carried all the brass of them to Baby-

lon. 18. The caldrons also, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the bowls, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass, wherewith they ministered, took they away. 19. And the basons, and the fire-pans, and the bowls, and the caldrons, and the candlesticks, and the spoons, and the cups; that which was of gold in gold, and that which was of silver in silver, took the captain of the guard away. 20. The two pillars, one sea, and twelve brazen bulls that were under the bases, which king Solomon had made in the house of the LORD: the brass of all these vessels was without weight. 21. And concerning the pillars, the height of one pillar was eighteen cubits, and a fillet of twelve cubits did compass it; and the thickness thereof was four fingers: it was hollow. 22. And a chapter of brass was upon it; and the height of one chapter was five cubits, with net-work and pomegranates upon the chapters round about, all of brass: the second pillar also and the pomegranates were like unto these. 23. And there were ninety and six pomegranates on a side; and all the pomegranates upon the net-work were a hundred round about.

We have here an account of the woful havock that was made by the Chaldean army, a month after the city was taken, under the command of Nebuzar-adan, who was *captain of the guard*, or general of the army, in this action. In the margin he is called the *chief of the slaughter-men*, or *executioners*; for soldiers are but slaughter-men, and God employs them as executioners of his sentence against a sinful people. Nebuzar-adan was chief of those soldiers, but in the execution he did, we have reason to fear he had no eye to God, but he served the king of Babylon and his own designs, now that he came into Jerusalem, into the very bowels of it, as captain of the slaughter-men there. And, 1. He laid the temple in ashes, having first plundered it of every thing that was valuable; he *burnt the house of the Lord*, that holy and beautiful house, where their fathers praised him, Isa. lxi. 11. 2. He burnt the royal palace, probably that which Solomon built, after he had built the temple, which was, ever since, the *king's house*. 3. He burnt all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great men, or those particularly; if any escaped, it was only some sorry cottages for the poor of the land. 4. He broke down all the walls of Jerusalem, to be revenged upon them for standing in the way of his army so long. Thus, of a defended city it was made a ruin, Isa. xxv. 2. 5. He carried away many into captivity, (v. 15.) he took away certain of the poor of the people, of the people in the city, for the poor of the land, the poor of the country, he left for vine-dressers and husbandmen. He also carried off the residue of the people that remained in the city, that had escaped the sword and famine; and the deserters, such as he thought fit, or rather such as God thought fit; for he had already determined some for the *pestilence*, some for the *sword*, some for *famine*, and some for *captivity*, ch. xv. 2.

But nothing is more particularly and largely related here than the carrying away of the appurte-

nances of the temple. All that were of great value were carried away before, *the vessels of silver and gold*, yet some of that sort remained, which were now carried away, *v. 19*. But most of the temple-*prey* that was now seized, was of brass; which, being of less value, was carried off last. When the gold was gone, the brass soon went after, because the people repented not, according to Jeremiah's prediction, *ch. xxvii. 19, &c.* When the walls of the city were demolished, the pillars of the temple were pulled down too, and both in token that God, who was the Strength and Stay both of their civil and their ecclesiastical government, was departed from them. No walls can protect nor pillars sustain those, from whom God withdraws. These pillars of the temple were not for support, (for there was nothing built upon them,) but for ornament and significancy. They were called *Jachin, He will establish*; and *Boaz, In him is strength*; so that the breaking of these signified that God would no longer establish his house, nor be the Strength of it. These pillars are here very particularly described, (*v. 21.—23.* from 1 Kings vii. 15.) that the extraordinary beauty and stateliness of them may affect us the more with the demolishing of them. All the vessels that belonged to the brazen altar were carried away; for the iniquity of Jerusalem, like that of Eli's house, was not to be purged by sacrifice or offering, 1 Sam. iii. 14. It is said, (*v. 20.*) *The brass of all these vessels was without weight*; so it was in the making of them, (1 Kings vii. 47.) *the weight of the brass was not then found out*, (2 Chron. iv. 18.) and so it was in the destroying of them. Those that made great spoil of them did not stand to weigh them, as purchasers do, for whatever they weighed it was all their own.

24. And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door: 25. He took also out of the city a eunuch which had the charge of the men of war; and seven men of them that were near the king's person, which were found in the city; and the principal scribe of the host, who mustered the people of the land; and three-score men of the people of the land, *that were found in the midst of the city.* 26. So Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah. 27. And the king of Babylon smote them, and put them to death in Riblah, in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive out of his own land. 23. This is the people whom Nebuchadrezzar carried away captive: In the seventh year, three thousand Jews and three and twenty: 29. In the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty and two persons: 30. In the three and twentieth year of Nabuchadrezzar, Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred forty and five persons: all the persons *were* four thousand and six hundred.

We have here a very melancholy account,

1. Of the slaughter of some great men, in cold blood, at Riblah, seventy-two in number, (accord-

ing to the number of the elders of Israel, Numb. xi. 26, 27.) so they are computed, 2 Kings xxv. 18, 19. We read there of five out of the temple, two out of the city, five out of the court, and sixty out of the country. The account here agrees with that, except in one article; there, it is said that there were five, here, there were seven, of those that were *near the king*; which Dr. Lightfoot reconciles thus, that he took away seven of those that were near the king, but two of them were Jeremiah himself and Ebed-melech, who were both discharged, as we have read before, so that there were only five of them put to death, and so the number was reduced to seventy-two; some of all ranks, for they had all corrupted their way; and it is probable that such were made examples of, as had been most forward to excite and promote the rebellion against the king of Babylon. *Seraiah the chief priest* is put first, whose sacred character could not exempt him from this stroke; how should it, when he himself had profaned it by sin? Seraiah the prince was a *quiet prince*, (*ch. lxi. 59.*) but perhaps Seraiah the priest was not so, but quiet and turbulent, by which he had made himself obnoxious to the king of Babylon. The leaders of this people had caused them to err, and now they are in a particular manner made monuments of divine justice.

2. Of the captivity of the rest. Come, and see how Judah was carried away captive out of his own land, (*v. 27.*) and how it spued them out as it spued out the Canaanites that went before them, which God had told them it would certainly do, if they trod in their steps, and copied out their abominations, Lev. xviii. 28. Now here is an account,

(1.) Of two captivities which we had an account of before, one in the seventh year of Nebuchadrezzar, the same with that which is said to be in his eighth year, (2 Kings xxiv. 12.) another in his eighteenth year, the same with that which is said (*v. 12.*) to be in his nineteenth year. But the sums here are very small, in comparison with what we find expressed concerning the former, (2 Kings xxiv. 14, 16.) when there was 18,000 carried captive, whereas here they are said to be 3023; small too in comparison with what we may reasonably suppose concerning the latter; for when all the residue of the people were carried away, (*v. 15.*) one would think there should be more than 832 souls; therefore Dr. Lightfoot conjectures that these accounts being joined to the story of the putting to death of the great men at Riblah, all that are here said to be carried away were *put to death* as rebels.

(1.) Of a third captivity, not mentioned before, which was in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadrezzar, four years after the destruction of Jerusalem; (*v. 30.*) then Nebuzar-adan came, and carried away 745 Jews; it is probable that this was done in revenge of the murder of Gedaliah, which was another rebellion against the king of Babylon, and that those who were now taken, were aiders and abettors of Ishmael in that murder, and were not only carried away, but put to death, for it; yet this is uncertain. If this be the sum total of the captives, (*All the persons were 4600, v. 30.*) we may see how strangely they were reduced from what they had been, and may wonder as much how they came to be so numerous again, as afterward we find them; for it should seem that, as at first in Egypt, so again in Babylon, the Lord made them fruitful in the land of their affliction, and the more they were oppressed the more they multiplied. And the truth is, this people were often miracles both of judgment and mercy.

31. And it came to pass, in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the

five and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison, 32. And spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon, 33. And changed his prison-garments; and he did continually eat bread before him all the days of his life. 34. And for his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion, until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

This passage of story concerning the reviving which king Jehoiachin had in his bondage, we had likewise before, 2 Kings xxv. 27.—30. Only there it is said to be done on the *twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month*, here on the *twenty-fifth*; but in a thing of this nature, two days make a very slight difference in the account. It is probable that the orders were given for his release on the *twenty-fifth* day, but that he was not presented to the king till the *twenty-seventh*. We may observe in this story,

1. That new lords make new laws. Nebuchadnezzar had long kept this unhappy prince in prison; and his son, though well-affected to the prisoner, could not procure him any favour, not one smile, from his father; any more than Jonathan could for David from his father; but when the old peevish man was dead, his son countenanced Jehoiachin, and made him a favourite. It is common for children to undo what their fathers have done; it were well if it were always as much for the better as this here.

2. That the world we live in is a changing world. Jehoiachin, in his beginning, fell from a throne into a prison, but here he is advanced again to a throne of state, (v. 32.) though not to a throne of power. As, before, the robes were changed into prison-garments, so, now, they were converted into robes again. Such chequer-work is this world; prosperity and adversity are set the one over against the other,

that we may learn to *rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not*.

3. That though the night of affliction be very long, yet we must not despair but that the day may dawn at last. Jehoiachin was thirty-seven years a prisoner; in confinement, in contempt, ever since he was eighteen years old, in which time we may suppose him so inured to captivity, that he had forgotten the sweets of liberty; or rather, that after so long an imprisonment it would be doubly welcome to him. Let those whose afflictions have been lengthened out, encourage themselves with this instance; the vision will at the end speak comfortably, and therefore wait for it. *Dum spiro spero—While there is life, there is hope. Non si male nunc, et olim sic erit—Though now we suffer, we shall not always suffer.*

4. That God can make his people to find favour in the eyes of those that are their oppressors, and unaccountably turn their hearts to pity them, according to that word, (Ps. cvi. 46.) *He made them to be pitied of all those that carried them captives*. He can bring those that have spoken roughly to speak kindly, and those to feed his people that have fed upon them. Those therefore that are under oppression will find that it is not in vain to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord. Therefore our times are in God's hand, because the hearts of all we deal with are so.

And now, upon the whole matter, comparing the prophecy and the history of this book together, we may learn, in general, (1.) That it is no new thing for churches and persons highly dignified to degenerate, and become very corrupt. (2.) That iniquity tends to the ruin of those that harbour it; and if it be not repented of and forsaken, will certainly end in their ruin. (3.) That external professions and privileges will not only not amount to an excuse for sin, and an exemption from ruin, but will be a very great aggravation of both. (4.) That no word of God shall fall to the ground, but the event will fully answer the prediction; and the unbelief of man shall not make God's threatenings, any more than his promises, of no effect. The justice and truth of God are here written in bloody characters, for the conviction or the confusion of all those that make a jest of his threatenings. Let them *not be deceived, God is not mocked*.