AN

EXPOSITION, WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

OF THE PROPHECY OF

AMOS.

Though this prophet appeared a little before Isaiah, yet he was not, as some have mistaken, that Amos, who was the father of Isaiah, (Isa. i. 1.) for in the Hebrew their names are very different; their families too were of a different character; for Isaiah was a courtier, Amos a country farmer. Amos signifies, a burden, whence the Jews have a tradition, that he was of a slow tongue, and spake with stammering lips; we may rather, in allusion to his name, say, that his speech was weighty, and his word the burden of the Lord. He was (as most think) of Judah, yet prophesied chiefly against Israel, and at Bethel, ch. vii. 13. Some think his style savours of his extraction, and is more plain and rustic than that of some of the other prophets; I do not see it so, but it is plain that his matter agreed with that of his contemporary, Hosea, that out of the mouth of these two witnesses the word might be established. It appears by his context with Amaziah the priest of Bethel, that he met with opposition in his work; but was a man of undaunted resolution in it, faithful and bold in reproving sin, and denouncing the judgments of God for it, and pressing in his exhortations to repentance and reformation. He begins with threatenings against the neighbouring nations that were enemies to Israel, ch. i. and ii. He then calls Israel to account; and judges them for their idolatry, their unworthy walking under the favours God had bestowed upon them, and their incorrigibility under his judgments, ch. iii. and iv. He calls them to repentance, (ch. v.) rejecting their hypocritical sacrifices, unless they did repent. He foretells the desolations that were coming upon them, notwithstanding their security, (ch. vi.) some particular judgments, (ch. vii.) particularly on Amaziah; and after other reproves and threatenings, (ch. viii. and ix.) concludes with a promise of the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom, and the happiness of God's spiritual Israel therein; just as the prophecy of Joel concluded. These prophets, having opened the wound in their reproves and threatenings, which show all wrong, in the promises of gospel-grace open the remedy, which alone will set all to rights.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter, we have, 1. The general title of this prophecy, v. 1, with the general scope of it, v. 2. II. God's particular controversy with Syria, (v. 3-5,) with Palestine, (v. 6-8) with Tyre, (v. 9, 10,) with Edom, (v. 11, 12,) and with Ammon, (v. 13-15,) for their cruelty to his people, and the many injuries they had done them. This explains God's pleading with the nations, Joel iii. 2.

1. THE words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. 2. And he said, The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

Here is,

1. The general character of this prophecy. It is, the words which the prophet saw. Are words to be seen? Yes, God's words are; the apostles speak of the word of life, which they had not only heard, but which they had seen with their eyes, which they had looked upon, and which their hands had handled; (1 John i. 1.) such a real, substantial thing is the word of God. The prophet saw these words, (1.) They were revealed to him in a vision, as John is said to see the voice that spake to him; Rev. i. 12. (2.) That which was foretold by them, was to him as certain as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes.
It innumates how strong he was in that faith which is the evidence of things not seen.

2. The person by whom this prophecy was sent; Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, and was a woolcomber. Some think he was a rich deader in cattle; the word is used concerning the king of Moab; (2 Kings iii. 4;) He was a sheep-maste; it is probable that he got money by that business, and yet, he must quit it, to follow God as a prophet. Others think he was a poor keeper of cattle, for we had, (ch. vi. 14, 15,) that he was within a gatherer of wild figs, a poor employment, by which we may suppose he was a man of a few circumstances. God took him, as he did David, from following the flock, and Elisha from following the plough. Many were trained up for great employments, in the quiet, innocent contemplative business of shepherds. When God would send a prophet to reprove and warn his people, he employed a shepherd, a herdsman, to do it, for they had made themselves as the horse and mule that have no understanding; nay, worse than the ass that knows his owner. God sometimes chooses the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise, 1 Cor. i. 27. Note, Those whom God has endowed with abilities for his service, ought not to be despised or laid aside for the meanness either of their original, or of their beginnings. Though Amos himself is not ashamed to own this, he was a herdsman, yet others ought not to upbraid him with it, or think the worse of him for it.

3. The persons concerned in the prophecy of this book; it is concerning Israel, the ten tribes, who were now ripest in sin, and ripest for ruin. God had raised them up prophets among themselves, (ch. ii. 11,) but they regarded them not; therefore God sends them one from Tekoa, in the land of Judah, that, coming from another country, unexpected, and more awful, and perhaps the worse, the despot rather out of his own country, because there he was despised for his having been a herdsman. See Matt. xiii. 55, 57.

4. The time when these prophesies were delivered. (1.) The book is dated, as laws used to be, by the reigns of the kings under whom the prophet prophesied. It was in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, when the affairs of that kingdom went very well, and of Jeroboam the second king of Israel, when the affairs of that kingdom went pretty well; yet then they must both be told both of the sins they were guilty of, and of the judgments that were coming upon them for those sins, that they might not with the present gleam of prosperity flatter themselves into an opinion of their innocence, or a confidence of their perpetual security. 2. It is dated by a particular event to which his prophecy had reference; it was two years before the earthquake, that earthquake which is mentioned to have been in the days of Uzziah, (Jer. xiv. 5,) which put the nation into a dreadful fright, for it is there said, They fled before it. But how could they flee from it? Some conjecture that this earthquake was at the time of Isaiah's vision, when the prophet saw the Lord sitting upon the throne. The tradition of the Jews is, that it happened just at the time when Uzziah presumptuously invaded the priest's office, and went in to burn incense, 2 Chron. xxvi. 16. Josephus mentions this earthquake, Antiq. IX. 11, and says, "By it half of a mountain was removed and carried to a plain four furlongs off; and it spoiled the king's gardens." God by this prophet gave warning of two years before, that he would shake down their houses, ch. iii. 15.

5. The introduction to these prophesies, containing the general scope of them; (v. 2.) The Lord will roar from Zion. His threatenings by his prophets, and the executions of those threatenings in his providence, will be as terrible as the roaring of a lion is to the shepherds and their flocks. Amos here speaks the same language with his contemporaries, Hosea (ch. xi. 10,) and Joel, ch. iii. 16. The lion roars before he tears; God gives warning before he strikes. Observe, (1.) Where this warning comes; from Zion and Jerusalem, from the oracles of God there delivered; for by them is thy servant warned, Ps. xix. 11. Our God, whose special residence is there, will issue out warrants. Grow at that court, as it were, for the executing of judgments on the land. See Jer. xxx. 30. In Zion was the mercy-seat, thence the Lord roars; intimating that God's word of justice, when it comes from his lips, is not alloy'd and mitigated by mercy, but, as they are warnings, they are really acts of mercy. We are chastened, that we may not be condemned. (2.) What effect the warning has; The habitations of the shepherds mourn, either because they fear the roaring lion, or, because they feel what is signified by that comparison, the consequence of a great drought, (ch. iv. 7,) which made the top of Carmel, of the most fruitful fields, to wither, and become as a desert, Joel i. 12, 17.

3. Thus saith the Lord. For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshted Gilead with threshing-instruments of iron; 4. But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad. 5. I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the Lord. 6. Thus saith the Lord. For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom: 7. But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof: 8. And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon; and I will turn my hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord God. 9. Thus saith the Lord. For three transgressions of Tyre, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant: 10. But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyre, which shall devour the palaces thereof. 11. Thus saith the Lord. For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because, they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant: 12. But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.
turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border: 14. But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind: 15. And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the Lord.

What the Lord says here, may be explained by what he says, Jer. xii. 14. Thus said the Lord, against all my evil neighbours thus touch in mine heart. Behold, I will pluck them out. Damascus was a near neighbour to Israel on the north, Tyre and Gaza on the west, Edom on the south, Ammon and (in the next chapter) Moab on the east; and all of them had been, one time, one way, or other, prickings briers and grieving thorns to Israel, evil neighbours to them; and because God espouses his people's cause, he there calls them his evil neighbours, and here comes forth to reckong them with them. The method taken in dealing with each of them is, in part, the same, and therefore we put them together, and yet in each there is something peculiar.

1. Let us see what is repeated, both by way of charge, and by way of sentence, concerning them all. "The controversy God has with each of them, is so weighty to Israel, that he does not report by way of sentence, what is pecu- linary to God Israel. Though those nations will not worship him as their God, yet they shall be made to know that they are accountable to him as their Judge. The God of Israel is the God of the whole earth, and has something to say to them, that shall make them tremble. Against them the Lord roars out of Zion. And before God, by the prophet, threaten Israel and Judah, be denounced judgments against these nations whom he made use of as scourges to them for their being so; which might serve for a check to their pride and insolence, and a relief to his people under their defections; for hereby they might see that God had not quitted his interest in them, and therefore might hope they had not lost their interest in him.

Now let us here come to the main subject.

1. The indictment drawn up against them all is thus far the same, (1.) That they are charged in general with three transgressions, and with four, that is, with many transgressions; as by one or two, we mean a few, so by three or four we mean many, as in Latin, a man that is very happy, is said to be terque quaterque beatit.—three and four times happy; or with three and four, that is, with seven transgressions, a number of perfection; intimating that they have filled up the measure of their iniquities, and are ripe for ruin. Or, with three, that is, a variety of sins, and with a fourth, especially, which is specified concerning each of them, though the other three are not. As Prov. xxx. 13, 18, 21, 29, where we read of three things, ver. four, generally one seems to be more especially intended. (2.) That the particular sin, which is fastened upon as the fourth, and which alone is specified, is, the sin of persecution; it is some mischief or other done to the people of God, that is particularly charged upon every one of them; for persecution is the measure- filling sin of any people; and it is this sin that will be particularly reckoned for; I was hungry, and you gave me no meat; much more if it may be said, I was hungry, and you took my meat from me.

2. The judgment given against them all, is thus far the same. (1.) That, their sin being come to such a height, God will not turn away the punishment thereof. Though he has granted them a long reprieve, and has often turned away their punishment, yet now he will turn it away no longer, but justice shall take its course, "I will not revoke it (so some read it); I will not recall the voice which is gone forth from Zion and Jerusalem, (v. 2.) speaking death and terror to the sinful nations." It is an irrepressible sentence; God has spoken it, and how it will not call it back. If for a long, he will not hear always, with those that provoke him, and when the decree brings forth, it will bring up. (2.) That God will kindle a fire among them; this is said concerning all these evil neighbours, v. 4, 7, 10, 12, 14. God will send a fire into their cities. When fires are kindled, that lay cities, houses, and trees in ashes, whether designedly or casually, God must be acknowledged in it; they are of his sending; sin stirs up the fire of his jealousy, and that kindles other fires.

11. Let us see what is mentioned both by way of charge, and by way of sentence, that is peculiar to each of them; that every one may take his portion.

1. Concerning Damascus, the head city of Syria, a kingdom that was often vexations to Israel. (1.) They hence say of Damascus, 1 (2.) That he spurned in the name of Damascus was, using the Gibe- lites barbarously; they threshed Gilead with threshing-instruments of iron, (v. 3.) which may be understood either literally, of their putting the inhabitants of Gilead to the torture, or to cruel deaths, whom they got into their hands; as David put the Ammonites under saws and hammers, 2 Sam. xii. 31. We read with what inhumanity Hazael king of Damascus was treated by the prophets, 2 Kings xii. 20, 21. They say concerning him, (2 Kings xii. 18.) he dashed their children, and ripped up their women with child; and see what desolations he made in their land, 2 Kings x. 32, 33. Or, it may be taken figuratively, for his laying the country waste, and this very similitude is used in the history of it; (2 Kings xiii. 7.) He destroyed them, and made them like the dust by threshing. Note, Men often do that unjustly and wickedly, and (3.) Severely reckoned with for it, which yet God justly permits them to do. The church is called God's threshing, and the corn of his floor; (Isa. xxix. 10.) but if men make it their threshing, and their flour, they shall be sure to hear of it.

2. The peculiar punishment of Damascus is, [1.] That the fire which shall be sent up, shall fasten upon Damascus, in that place not the chief city, or the country towns, but on the house of Hazael, which he built; and it shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad, the royal palaces inhabited by the kings of Syria, many of whom were of that name. Note, Even royal palaces are no fence against the judgments of God, though ever so richly furnished, though ever so strongly fortified. [2.] That the enemy shall force his way into the city; (v. 3.) I will break the bar of Damascus, and the gate will open. Or, it may be understood figuratively; all that which is depended upon as the strength and safety of that great city, shall fail, and prove insufficient. When God's judgments come with commission, it is in vain to think of turning them out.
of Amorites went upon Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin, at the instigation of Ahaz king of Judah.

2. Concerning Gaza, a city of the Philistines, and the inhabitants of the other cities of the Philistines, Ashdod, (or Azotus,) Ashkelon, and Ekron, should all be cut off, and God would make as thorough work with them in their ruin as they would have made with God's people when they carried away the whole captivity; for even the remnant of them shall perish, v. 8. Note, God will make a full end of those that think to make a full end of God's people.

3. Concerning Tyre, that famous city of wealth and strength, that was itself a kingdom, v. 9. (1.) The peculiar sin of Tyre is, delivering up the whole captivity to Edom, selling to the Edomites those of Israel that fled to them for shelter, or any way fell into their hands; not caring what hardships they put upon them, so they could but make gain of them to themselves. Herein they forgot the brotherly covenant, the league of friendship, v. 10. (2.) Here is nothing peculiar in the punishment of Tyrsus, but that the palace thereof shall be devoured; which was done when Nebuchadnezzar took it after thirteen years' siege. Their merchants were all princes, and their private houses were as palaces; but the fire shall make no more of them than cottages.

4. Concerning Edom, the posterity of Esau. (1.) Their peculiar sin was, an unmerciful, unwearied pursuit of the people of God, and their taking all advantages against them to do them a mischief, v. 11. He did pursue his brother with the sword, not only of old, when the king of Edom took up arms to oppose the children of Israel's passage through his border, (Num. xx. 1.) but ever since upon all occasions; they had not strength and courage enough to face them in the field of battle, but, whenever any other enemy had put Judah or Israel to flight, then the Edomites set in with the pursuers, fell upon the rear, and destroyed them as they fled, and took advantage of all opportunities, and (as is usual with cowards when they have an enemy at an advantage) they did cast off all pity. Those that are least courageous, are commonly most cruel; Edom was so; his malice destroyed his compassion; (so the word is;) he stripped himself of the tenderness of a man, and put on the fierceness of a beast of prey; and, as such a one, he did rear, his anger did prance upon him, and he was not patient, and he never knew when he had sucked enough of the blood of Israel, but, like the horse-leech, still cried, Give, give. Nay, he kept his wrath for ever; when he wanted objects of his wrath, and opportunity to show it, yet he kept it in reserve, (it rested in his bosom,) rolled it under his tongue as a sweet morsel, and had it ready to spit in the face of Israel upon the next occasion. Cursed be such cruel wrath and anger so fierce, so outrageous; which makes men like the devil, who continually seeks to devour, and unlike to God, who keeps not his anger for ever. (2.) Concerning Edom's brother, whome he ought to have protected: it was hereditary, as if it had been entailed upon the family ever since Esau hated Jacob, and time itself could not wear it out, no, nor the brotherly conduct of Israel toward them, (Deut. ii. 4.) and the express law given to Israel, (Deut. xxxi. 7.) Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother. (2.) Here is nothing peculiar in the punishment of Edom, because a fire shall be sent to devour their palaces. Note, The fire of God's anger against our brethren kindles the fire of God's anger against us.

5. Concerning the Ammonites, v. 15. (1.) See how violently the fire of their anger turned against the people of God; they not only triumphed in their calamities, (as we find, Ezek. xxxii. 2, 6.) but they did themselves use them barbarously, they ripped up the women with child of Gilead, a piece of cruelty, the very mention whereof strikes a horror upon one's mind; one would think it not possible that any of the human race should be so inhuman. Hazael was guilty of it, 2 Kings viii. 12. It was done not only in a brutish rage, which fails without consideration upon all that comes before it, but with a devilish design to extirpate all posterity, and by killing not only all that were born, but all that were to be born, worse than Egyptian cruelty. It was that they might enlarge their border, that they might make the land of Gilead their own, and there might be none to lay claim to it, or give them any disturbance in the possession of it. We find, (Jer. xlix. 1.) that the Ammonites inherited God, that is, Gilead, and they pretend that Israel has no sons, no heirs. We know in what way their doom was, and how heinous their crime, who said, This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours by occupancy. See what cruelty covetousness is the cause of; and what horrid practices those are often put upon, that are greedy to enlarge their own border. (2.) See how violently the fire of God's anger burned against them; shall not God visit for these things done in any way their kind, especially when they are done to his own people? Shall not his soul be avenged on such a nation as this? No doubt it shall. The fire shall be kindled with shouting in the day of battle, war shall kindle the fire, it shall be a fire accompanied with the sword, or a raging fire, which shall make a noise like that of soldiers ready to engage. And it shall be as a tempest in the day of the whirlwind, which comes swiftly, fiercely, and bears down all before it. Or, This tempest and whirlwind shall be as belows to the fire, to make it burn the stronger, and spread the further. It is particularly threatened that their king and his princes shall go together into captivity, carried away by the King of Babylon, not long after Judah was. See what changes God's providence often makes with men, when they use their own sins; kings become captives, and princes prisoners. Milcom shall go into captivity; some understand it of the god of the Ammonites, whom they called Moloch—a king; he, and his princes, and his priests that attended him, shall go into captivity; their idol shall be so far from protecting them, that it shall itself go into captivity with them. Note, Those who by violence and cruelty exalt themselves, shall have a fall, and will justly be expelled and excluded their own border; nor is it strange if those who make no conscience of invading the rights of others, be able to make no resistance against those who invade theirs.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter, I. God, by the prophet, proceeds in a like controversy with Moab as before with other nations, v.
But pair And will The had danger is And the man Tliey fire so shall Thus between he, selves. not

Kings fane eartheous and the the
deuX things of their rain, and their utter inability to prevent it, v. 11. 10.

1. TMIUS saith the Lord, for three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burnt the bones of the king of Edom into lime; 2. But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth; and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet: 3. And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and shall slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the Lord. 4. Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err; after the which their fathers have walked; 5. But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem. 6. Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes; 7. That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek; and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name: 3. And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.

Here is, 1. The judgment of Moab, another of the nations that bordered upon Israel. They are reckoned with, and shall be punished for three transgressions and for four, as those before. Now, 1. Moab’s fourth transgression, as theirs who were before set for the bar, was, cruelly: the instance given refers not to the people of God, but to a heathen like themselves. 2. Let Moab burn the bones of the king of Edom into lime. We find there was war between the Edomites and the Moabites, in which the king of Moab, in distress, and rage, offered his own son for a burnt-offering, to appease his deity, 2 Kings iii. 26, 27. And it should seem that afterward he, or some of his successors, in revenge upon the Edomites for bringing him that extremity, having already burnt the bodies of their idols at Edom, he seized him alive, and burnt him to ashes, or slew him, and burnt his body, or dug up the bones of their dead king, of that particularly who had so straitened him, and, in token of his rage and fury, burnt them to lime, and perhaps made use of the powder of his bones for the white-washing of the walls and ceiling of his palace, that he might please himself with the sight of that monument of his revenge. Est vindicta bonum vitæ jucundius ipsi—Revenge is sweeter than life itself. It is barbarous to abuse human bodies, for we ourselves also are in the body; it is senseless to abuse dead bodies, nay, it is impious, for we believe and look for their resurrection. And to the third of Moab, the king, whose persons and names ought to be in a particular manner respected and had in veneration,) is an affront to majesty: it is an argument of a base spirit for those to trample upon a dead lion, who, were he alive, would tremble before him. 2. Moab’s doom for this transgression is, (1.) A judgment of death. Those that deal cruelly shall be cruelly dealt with; (2.) Moab is to be cut off, as it were, from the face of the earth, with the sword of war, which kills with tumult, with shouting, and with sound of trumpet, circumstances that make it so much the more terrible; as the lion’s roaring aggravates his tearing; every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, Is. xi. 5. (2.) It is a judgment upon their judge, who had passed the sentence upon the bones of the king of Edom, but they should be burnt to lime; I will cut him off, says God; (v. 3.) he shall know there is a Judge that is higher than he. The king, the chief judge, and all the inferior judges and princes, shall be cut off together. If the people sometimes suffer for the sin of their princes, yet the princes themselves shall not escape, Jer. xlvii. 47. Thus far is the judgment of Moab.

II. Judah also is a near neighbour to Israel, and therefore now that justice is riding the circuit, that shall not be passed by; that nation had made itself like the heathen, and mingled itself with them, and therefore the indictment here runs against them in the same form in which it had run against all the rest; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; their sins are as many as the sins of other nations, and we find them huddled up with them in the same character, Jer. ix. 26. Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, jumble them together, they are all alike; the sentence here also is the same; (v. 5.) I will send a fire upon Judah, though it is the land where God is known, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, though it is the holy city, and God has been known in its palaces for a refuge, Ps. lxxiii. 8. But the sin here charged upon Judah, is different from all the rest. The other nations were reckoned with for injuries done to men, but Judah is reckoned with for indignities done to God, v. 4. 1. They put contempt upon his statutes; and persisted in disobedience to them. They have despised the bow of the archer, as if he should not have stood, and have had anything in it; valuable, and herein they despised the wisdom, justice, and goodness, as well as the authority and sovereignty, of the Law-Maker; this they did, in effect, when they kept not his commandments, made no conscience of them, took no care about them. 2. They put honour upon his rivals, their idols, here called their lips, which they caused them to pass by for silver, as Ps. Hb. ii. 18. And they that are led away into the error of idolatry, are by that led into a multitude of other errors, Una dato absurdo mile sequentur—One absurdity draws after it a thousand. God is an infinite, eternal Spirit; but when that truth of God is by idolatry changed into a lie, all his other truths are in danger of being so changed likewise; thus they exchange the света правда, the light of the glory of God, for the dark shadows and splintery lights of idols, some darkening, some driving them up to strong delusions; nor was it any excuse for their sin, that they were the lies after which their fathers walked, for they should rather have taken warning, than taken pattern, by those that perished with those lies in their right hand.

III. We now at length come to the words which Amos sauc concerning Israel; the reproofs and threatenings having walked the round, here the center, here they settle. He begins with them as with the rest, For three transgressions of Israel, and...
for four, I will not turn away the punishment there-
of; if all these nations must be punished for their
iniquities, shall Israel go unpunished? Observe here,
what their sins were, for which God would reckon
with them.

1. Perverting justice. This was the sin of those
who were intrusted with the administration of jus-
tice, the judges and magistrates, and all parties con-
cerned; they made nothing of selling a righteous
man for a pair of shoes, or, as expressing the case
with more dignity, a pair of old shoes, in the
brickyard before them; for a piece of silver sentence
was passed, not according to the merits of the case,
but the bribe always turned the scale, and judgment
was set to sale by auction to the highest bidder.
They would sell the life and livelihood of a poor
man for a pair of shoes, for the least advantage to
themselves that could be proposed to them; give
them but a pair of shoes, and the cause of a poor
man, who could not give them so much as that,
should be betrayed, and left at the mercy of those
that will have no mercy; they will rather play at
small game than sit out; for a piece of bread such
a man will transgress. Note, Those who will wrong
their consciences for any thing, will come at length
to do it for next to nothing, those who begin to sell
justice for silver, will, in time, be so solicit as to
sell it for a pair of shoes, a part of old shoes.

2. Offressing the poor, and seeking to benefit
themselves by doing them a mischief; They pant
after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor;
they swallow up the poor with the utmost greedi-
ness, and make a prey of them that are in sorrow,
with dust on their heads; poor orphans that are in
mournings for their parents, they catch at them to
get their estates into their hands; they never rest
still till they have got the heads of the poor in the
dust, to be trodden on. Or, They pant after the dust
of the earth, silver and gold, white and yellow dust;
they covet it earnestly, and levy it upon the head
of the poor, by their unjust exactions. Note, Men's
seeking to enrich themselves by the impoverishing
of others, is a transgression which God will not long
turn away the punishment of. This is turning aside
the way of the meek, contriving to do injury to those
who, they know, are mild and patient, and will bear
injury. They invade their rights, break their mea-
sures, and obstruct the course of justice in favour of
them, not suffering them to go on with their right-
eous cause; this is turning aside their way. Note,
The more patiently men bear the injuries that are
done them, the greater is the sin of those that injure
them, and the more occasion they have to expect
that God will right them, and take vengeance for
them. 1, as a deaf man, heard not, and then thou
wilt hear.

3. Abominable uncleanness, even incest itself, such
as is not named among the Gentiles, that a man
should have his father's wife, (1 Cor. v. 1) his fa-
ther's concubine; A man and his father will go in
unto his father's concubine, and have his father's
any other of an unbounded, promiscuous lust; and
yet where the former iniquities of oppression and
extortion are, this also is found; for laws of modesty
seldom hold those that have broken the bands of
justice, and cast away its cords from them. This
wickedness is such a scandal to religion, and the
profession of it, that they who are guilty of it, are
looked upon as public scolds, as those that mix
among the people, and corrupt the public mind, and
turn it loose among the heathen, as if he countenanced
the villanies which those who pretend relation to him allow themselves in,
and were altogether such a one as they.

4. Regulating themselves, and yet pretending to
honour their God with that which they had got by
oppression and extortion, v. 8. They add idoltry
to their injustice, and then think so much for their
injustice with their idoltry. (1.) They make merry
with that which they have unjustly squeezed from
the poor. They lay themselves down at ease, and
in state, and stretch themselves upon clothes laid in
pledge, which they ought to have restored the same
night, according to the law, Deut. xxiv. 12, 13.
And they drink the wine of the condemned, of such
as they have fined and laid heavy mullets upon;
spending that in sensuality, which they have got by
injustice. (2.) They think to make atonement for
their crimes, by feasting on the gains of oppression before
their altars, and drinking this wine in the house of
their god, in the temples where they worshipped
their calves, as if they would make God a Partner
in their crimes, by making him a Partner of the
profits of them—service good enough for false gods;
but the true God will not thus be mocked; he has
declared that he hates robbery for burnt-offerings,
and cannot be served acceptably but with that which
is got honestly.

3. Yet destroyed I the Amorite before
them, whose height was like the height of the
cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his
roots from beneath. 10. Also I brought you up
from the land of Egypt, and led you forty
years through the wilderness, to possess the
land of the Amorite. 11. And I raised up
of your sons for prophets, and of your young
men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O
children of Israel? saith the Lord. 12. But
ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and
commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy
not. 13. Behold, I am pressed under
you, as a cart is pressed that is full of
sheaves. 14. Therefore the flight shall pe-
rish from the swift, and the strong shall not
strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty
deliver himself: 15. Neither shall he stand
that handleth the bow; and he that is swift
of foot shall not deliver himself; neither shall
he that rideth the horse deliver himself: 16.
And he that is courageous among the mighty
shall flee away naked in that day, saith the
LORD.

Here, 1. God puts his people Israel in mind of the
great things he had done for them, in putting
them into possession of the land of Canaan, the
greatest part of which these ten tribes now enjoyed,
v. 9, 10. Note, We need often to be reminded of
the mercies we have received, which are the heav-
est aggravations of the sins we have committed.
We are given a thousand reasons to blush for the
meanness and unworthiness, and the disproportion
between his gifts and our merits; but he justly up-
braids us with our ingratitude, and ill requital of his
favours, and tells us what he has done for us, to
shame us for not rendering again according to the
benefit done to us. Son, remember; Israel, remem-
ber, (1.) "That God brought thee out of a house
full of bread to one that owed thee no bread,
and that fed thee in a wilderness, where, else,
thou hadst perished in slavery." (2.) That he led
thee forty years through a desert land, and
fed thee in a wilderness, where, else, thou hadst
perished with hunger. Mercies to our ancestors
were mercies to us; for if they had been cut off,
we had not been. (3.) That he made room for
them in Canaan, by extirpating the natives, by a series
of wonders little inferior to those by which they were
redeemed out of Egypt; I destroyed the Amorite
before them, here put for all the devoted nations. Observe the magnificence of the enemies that stood in their way, which is a great noise of, that God will not use, unless otherwise, Gen. xiv. 7, as they were of great stature, his height was like the height of the cedars, and the people of Israel were as shrubs to them; and of great strength, not only tall, but well set, he was strong as the oaks; their kingdom was eminent among the nations, and overtopped all its neighbours; the support and defence of the religious and civil religion. Thus, if a stately cedar, it was as firm as the stately oak; yet when God had a vine to plant there, (Ps. LXX. 8, 9.) this Amorite is not only cut down, but plucked up; I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath, so the Amorites were no more a nation, nor ever read of any more. Thus highly did God value Israel; he gave men for them, and people for their life, Is. viii. 4. How ungrateful then were they, who put such contempt upon him! (4.) That he made them possess the land of the Amorite, not only put it into their hands so that they became masters of it jure bellii—by right of conquest, but gave them a better title to it, so that it became theirs by promise. 2. He likewise upbraids them with the spiritual pride, and advantages they enjoyed as a holy nation, v. 11. They had help for their souls, which taught them how to make good use of their temporal enjoyments, and were therefore more valuable. It is true, the ten tribes had not God's temple, altar, and priesthood, and it was their own fault that they deserted them, and for that they might justly have been left in utter darkness; but God left not himself without witness, or them without guides, to show them the way. (1.) They had prophets that were powerful instructors in piety, divinely inspired and commissioned to make known the mind of God to them, to show them what is pleasing to God, and what displeasing; to reprove them for their faults, and warn them of their danger; to direct them in their difficulties, and comfort them in their troubles. God raised up prophets, spirited them for that work, and employed them in it. He raised them up of their sons, from among themselves, as Moses and Christ were raised up from among their brethren, D. ut. xviii. 15. It was an honour put upon their nation, and upon their families, that they had children of their own to be God's messengers to them, of their own language, and kindred, and by whom they might suspect to be prejudiced against them and their land, but those who knew wished well to them. Note, Faithful ministers are great blessings to any people, and it is God that raises them up to be so, and they may justly be reckoned an honour to the families they are of. (2.) They had Nazarites that were bright examples of godly men, who were set apart for a special use, Nazarites, men that bound themselves by a vow to God and his service, and, in pursuance of that, denied themselves many of the lawful delights of sense, as drinking wine, and eating grapes. There were some of their young men that were in their prime for the enjoyment of the pleasures of this life, and yet voluntarily abridged themselves of them; those God raised up by the power of his grace, to be monuments of his grace, to his glory, and to be his witnesses against the impiety of that degenerate age. Note, It is as great a blessing to any place to have eminent good Christians in it as to have eminent good ministers in it; for so they have examples to their rules. We must acknowledge that it bodes well for the church generally, and for a great number of hopeful young people among them, when he makes their young men Nazarites, devout and conscientious, and mortified to the pleasures of sense; those that are such Nazarites, are purer than snow, whiter than milk, they are indeed the elect young men, for their polishing is of sapphire, Lam. iv. 7. They that are such men, all these young men among them, have therein such an advantage, both for direction and encouragement, to be religious, as they will be called to an account for another day, if they do not improve. Israel is here reckoned with, not only for the prophets, but for the Nazarites, raised up among them. Concerning the truth of this, he appeals to them several times, Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? Can ye pluck your enemies yourselves sensible of the advantage you had by the prophets and Nazarites raised up among you? Note, Sinners' own consciences will be witnesses for God, that he has not been wanting to them in the means of grace, so that if they perish, it is because they have been wanting to themselves in not improving these means. The men of Judah shall themselves judge between God and his vineyard, whether he could have done more for it, Is. v. 3, 4.

3. He charges them with the abuse of the means of grace they enjoyed, and the opposition they gave to God's designs in affording them these means, v. 12. They were so far from walking in the light, that they were now in darkness, and did what they could to extinguish it, that it may not shine in their faces to their conviction. (1.) They did what they could to debauch good people; to draw them off from their seriousness in devotion, and their strictness in conversation; Ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink, contrary to their vow, that, having broken it in that instance, they might not pretend to keep it in any other. Some they surprised, or allured, into it, and with their much fair speech caused them to yield; others they forced and frightened into it, reproached and threatened them, if they were more precise than their neighbours; and by drawing them in to drink wine they spoiled them for Nazarites. Note, Satan and his agents are very busy to corrupt the minds of young people that look heavenward; and many that we thought would have been Nazarites, they have overcome by giving them wine to drink, by drawing them into the love of mirth and pleasure, and drinking company; multitudes of young men that bid fair for eminent professors of religion, have erred through wine, and been undone for ever. And how do the factors for hell triumph in the debauching of a Nazarite? (2.) They did more, as they could, to that end, by their doctrines, and by their words: You commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not, and threatened them if they did prophesy, (ch. vii. 12.) as if God's messengers were bound to observe your orders, and might not deliver their errand unless you gave them leave, and so you not only received the grace of God, in raising up those prophets, in vain; but put the highest affront upon the prerogative of God, and thus prevented the prophets spake. Note, These have a great deal to answer for that cannot bear faithful preaching, and those much more who suppress it.

4. He complains of the wrong they did him by their sins; (v. 13.) I am pained under you, I am straitened by you, and know not what to do, Hos. xi. 8, 9. I am loaded and burdened by you, and can no longer bear it, and therefore I will cease of me my adversaries, Isa. i. 24. I am pained under you, and the load of your sins, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves, is loaded with corn, in the midst of the joyful harvest, as long as any will lie on. Note, The great God complains of sin, especially the sins of his professing people, as a burden to him. He is offended with this respect (Ps. xciv. 10.) is broken with their reprobate heart, Ezek. vi. 9. A consideration which if it make not the sinners repentance very deep, it will make his
ruin very great. The great God that upholds the world, and never complains that he is pressed under the weight of it, he fainteth not, nor is he weary. He is strong, and is the strength of Israel; yea, and of their hypocritical services too, that he is weary of bearing them, Isa. i. 14. No wonder the creature groans being burdened, (Rom. viii. 22,) when the Creator says, I am pressed under them.

5. He threatens them with unavoidable ruin. And so some read, v. 13. Behold, I will press or straiten your place, as a cart full of sheaves presses; they shall stand as weapons of war, they shall sink under them, and shall make a noise, as a cart overloaded does. They that will not submit to the convictions of the word, that will neither be won by that, nor by the conversation of those about them, shall be made to sink under the weight of God's judgments. If God load us daily with his benefits, and we, notwithstanding that, lead him with our sides, how can we expect any other than that he should load us with his judgments? And it is here threatened in the three last verses, that when God comes forth to contend with this provoking people, they shall not be able to stand before him, to flee from him, or to make their part good with him; for when God judges, he will overcome. Though his patience be tired out, his power is not, and so the sinner shall find, to his cost. When the Assyrian army comes to lay the country waste by sword and captivity, none shall escape; but every one shall have his share in the common desolation. (1.) It will be in vain to think of fleeing from the enemy that comes armed with a commission to make all desolate. The flight shall perish from the swift; the arts of those that have been famed for happy escapes and happy retreats, shall now fail them; they shall have no flight to flee, or no way to take; or they shall have no strength or spirit to attempt it. They shall be at their vote end, and then they are soon at their flight end. Are they, as Assehel, as swift of foot as a wild roe? (2 Sam. ii. 18.) Yet, like him, they shall run the faster upon their own destruction; He that is swift of foot, shall not deliver himself; v. 15. Or, do they say, (as though Isa. xxx. 16.) Here we go, no fear, and we will ride upon the swift? Yet they shall be forsaken; Neither shall he that rides the horse, deliver himself from the pursuers. A horse is a vain thing for safety. (2.) It will be in vain to think of fighting it out. God is at war with them; and are they stronger than he? Is there any military force that can pretend to be a match for Omnipotence? No, the strong shall not strengthen his force. He that has a habit of strength, shall not be able to exert it when he has occasion for it. And the mighty, who should protect and deliver others, shall not be able to deliver himself, to deliver his soul, (so the word is,) shall not save his life. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, nor trust in it, but strengthen himself in the Lord his God, for in him is his strength and his strong strength. And as the bodily strength shall fail, the weakling, the all-brave, the all-mighty as well as the arm shall become insufficient; Neither shall he stand that handles the bow, though he stand at a distance, and shall betake himself to flight, and not trust to his own bow to save him; though the arm were ever so strong, and the armor ever so well fixed, neither will avail when the strong arm and strong strength are courageous among the mighty, that used to look with contempt upon him, and not be dismayed at it, he shall flee away naked in that day; not only disarmed, having thrown away his weapons both offensive and defensive, but plundered of his treasure, which he thought to have carried away with him, and he shall think it as much as bargain, that he has his life for a prey. Thus when God pleases, he takes away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causes them who used to boast of their courage, and their daring enterprises in the field, to wander and sneak in a wilderness where there is no way, Job xii. 24.

CHAP. III.

A stupid, senseless, heedless people, are, in this chapter, called upon to take notice, I. Of the judgments of God denounced upon them, and the reason of those judgments: and to be hereby awakened out of their security, v. 1. 8. II. Of the sins that were found among them, by which God was provoked thus to threaten, and thus punish, that they might judge God in his controversy with them, and, unless they repented and reformed, might expect no other than that God should proceed in his controversy, v. 9. 15.

1. HEAR this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, 2. You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. 3. Can two walk together except they be agreed? 4. Will a lion roar in the forest when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den if he have taken nothing? 5. Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all? 6. Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? 7. Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. 8. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

The scope of these verses is, to convince the people of Israel that God had a controversy with them; that which the prophet has to say to them, is, to let them know that the Lord has something to say against them, v. 1. They were his peculiar people above others, knew his name, and were called by it; nevertheless he had something against them, and they were called to hear what it is, that they may consider what answer they shall make; as the prisoner at the bar is bid to hearken to his indi-ment. The children of Israel would not regard the words of counsel and comfort that God had many a time spoken to them, and now they shall be made to hear the word of reproof and threatening that the Lord has spoken against them; for He will act as He has spoken.

1. Let them know that the gracious cognizance God had taken of them, and the favours he had bestowed upon them, should not exempt them from the punishment due to them for their sins. It is a family that God brought up out of the land of Egypt, (v. 1.) and it was no more than a family, when it went down thither; thence God delivered it, thence he fetched it to be a family to himself. It is not only the ten tribes, the kingdom of Israel, that must take notice of this, but that of Judah also, for it is spoken against the whole family that God brought up out of Egypt. It is a family that God has bestowed distinguishing favours upon, has owned in a peculiar manner; You only have I known of all the families of the earth. Note, God's church in the world is a family dignified above all.
the families of the earth. Those that know God, are known of him; in Judah is God known, and therefore Judah is more than any people known of God. God has known them; he has chosen them, covenanted with them, and conversed with them as his acquaintance.

Now, one would think, it should follow, "Therefore will I spare you, will concurr at your faults, and excuse you." No, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities. Note, The distinguishing favours of God to us, if they do not serve to restrain us from sin, shall not serve to exempt us from punishment: nay, the nearer any are to God in profession, and the kinder notice he has taken of them, the more surely, the more quickly, and the more severely, will he reckon with them, if they by a course of wilful sin profane their character, disgrace their relation to him, violate their engagements, and put a slight upon the favours and honours with which they have been distinguished. Therefore they shall be punished, because their sins dishonour him, affront him, and grieve him, more than the sins of others; and because it is necessary that God should vindicate his own honour by making it appear that he is not the less kind, and more merciful, in his forgiving them, than in his anger at them; they shall, but as bad as others, they shall be punished worse than others, because it is justly expected that they should be so much better than others. Judgment begins at the house of God, begins at the sanctuary; for God will be sanctified either by or upon those that come nigh unto him, Lev. x. 3.

2. Let them know, that they could not expect any comfortable companionship with God, unless they first made their peace with him; (v. 3.) Can two walk together except they be agreed? No, how should they? Where there is no friendship, there can be no fellowship; if two persons be at variance, they must first accommodate the matters in difference between them, before there can be any interchanging of good offices. Israel had affronted God, broken their covenant with him, and ill required his favours to them; and yet they expected that he should continue to walk with them, should take their part, act for them, and give them assurances of his presence with them, though they took no care by repentance and reformation to agree with their Adversary, and to turn away his wrath. "But low can that be (says God,) while you continue to engage to walk contrary to God, you can look for no other than that he should walk contrary to you," Lev. xxvi. 23, 24. Note, We cannot expect that God should be present with us, or act for us, unless we be reconciled to him. God and man cannot walk together, except they be agreed; unless we agree with God in our end, which is his glory, we cannot walk with him in any way.

3. Let them know that the warnings God gave them of judgments approaching, were not causeless and groundless, merely to amuse them, but certain declarations of the wrath of God against them, which (if they did not speedily repent) they would infallibly feel the effects of; (v. 4.) "Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey in view? No, he remains at home: nor will a young lion cry out of his den, if the old lion has taken nothing to bring home to him; nor would God thus give you warning both by the threatenings of his word, and by lesser judgments, if you had not by your sins made yourselves a prey to his wrath, nor if he were not really about to fall upon you with destroying judgments." Note, The threatenings of the word and providence of God are not bugbears, to frighten children and fools, but are certain inferences from the sin of man, and certain presages of the judgments of God.

4. Let them know that as their own wickedness was the procuring cause of these judgments, so they shall not be removed till they have done their work. v. 5. When God is come forth to contend with a sinful people, it is necessary that they should understand, (1.) That it is their own sin that has entangled them; for, can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? No, nature does not lay snares for the creatures, but the art of man; a bird baited in a snare by chance, except he be taken something as he designed? So neither will God remove the affliction he has sent, till it have done its work, and accomplished that for which he sent it. If our hearts be duly humbled, and we are brought by our afflictions to confess and forsake our sins, then the snare has taken something, then the point is gained, the end is answered, and then, and not till then, the Lord will deliver us. v. 6. Let them know that all their troubles came from the hand of God's providence, and from the counsel of his will; (v. 6.) Shall there be evil in a city, in a family, in a nation, and the Lord has not done it, appointed it, and performed what he appointed? The evil of sin is from ourselves, it is our own doing; the evil of sin is from God, it is God's will; our business, whoever are the instruments, God is the principal Agent. Out of his mouth both evil and good proceed.

This consideration, That, whatever evil is in the city, the Lord has done it, should engage us patiently to bear our share in public calamities, and to study to answer God's intention in them. Let them know that their prophets, who give them warning of judgments approaching, deliver nothing to them but what they have received from the Lord, to be delivered to his people. (1.) God makes it known beforehand to the prophets; (v. 7.) Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, none of that evil in the city spoken of, (v. 6.) but he reveals it to his servants the prophets, though to others it is kept secret. Note, We should learn to know what they who make light of the warnings which the prophets give them, in God's name. Observe, God's prophets are his servants, whom he employs to go on his errands to the children of men. The secret of God is with them; it is in some sense with all the righteous, (Prov. iii. 32.) with all that fear God, (Ps. xxv. 14.) but in a peculiar manner with the prophets, whom the Spirit of prophecy is a Spirit of revelation. It had put honour enough upon prophets, if it had been only said, that sometimes God is pleased to reveal to his prophets what he designs to do; but it speaks something very great, to say that he doeth nothing, but what he reveals it to them, as if they were the men of his counsel. Shall I hide from Abraham, who is a prophet, the thing which I do? Gen. xviii. 17. God will therefore be sure to reckon with those who put contempt on the prophets whom he puts this honour upon. (2.) The prophets cannot but make that known to the people, which God has made known to them; (v. 8.) The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy? His prophets, whom he has spoken in secret by dreams and visions, cannot but speak in public to the people what they have heard from God. They are so full of those things themselves, so well assured concerning them, and so much affected with them, that they cannot but speak of them; for out of the abundance
of the heart the mouth will speak. I believed, therefore have I spoken, Acts iv. 20. Nay, and beside the prophetic impulse which went along with the inspiration, and made the word like a fire in their bones, (Jer. xx. 9.) they received a command from God to deliver what they had been charged with; and they had been false to their trust, if they had not done it. Necessity was laid upon them, as upon the preachers of the gospel. 1 Cor. ix. 16.

7. Let them know that they ought to tremble before God, upon the fair warning he had given them; as they would, (1.) Upon the sounding of a trumpet, to give notice of the approach of the enemy, that all may stand upon their guard, and stand to their arms; Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid, or run together? Shall the Lord go not in? (2.) Upon the roar of a lion, God is sometimes as a lion, and a young lion, to the house of Judah, Hos. vi. 14. The lion roars before he terrors; thus God warns before he comes; (3.) When he comes as a traveller, (as he did against Samson, Judg. xiv. 5.) he cannot but be put in great consternation; yet the Lord roars out of Zion, (ch. i. 2.) and none are afraid, but they go on securely as if they were in no danger. Note, The fair warning given to a careless world, if it be not taken, will aggravate its condemnation another day. The lion roared, and they were not moved with fear to prepare an ark, O the amazing stupidity of an unbelieving world, that will not be wrought upon, no, not by the terrors of the Lord.

9. Publish in the palaces of Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof. 10. For they know not to do right, saith the Lord, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces. 11. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled. 12. Thus saith the Lord, As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch. 13. Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord God, the God of hosts. 14. That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Beth-el; and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground. 15. And I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord.

The Israelites are here again convicted and condemned, and particular notice given of the crimes they are convicted of, and the punishment they are condemned to suffer. 1. Notice is given of it to their neighbours. The prophet is ordered to publish it in the palaces of Ashdod, one of the chief cities of the Philistines; nay, the summons must go further, even to the palaces in the land of Egypt; the great men of both these nations that dwell in the palaces, that are inquisitive concerning the affairs of the neighbouring nations, and are conversant with the pulpits, and newswriters, let them assemble themselves upon the mountains of Samaria, v. 9. There, upon a throne high and lifted up, the judgment is set; Samaria is the criminal that is to be tried, let them be present at the trial, for it shall be (as other trials are) public, in the face of the country; let them make an appointment to meet there from all parts, to judge between God and his churchyard. God appeals to all impartial righteous men, Ezek. xxiii. 45. They will all subscribe to the equity of his proceedings, when they see how the case stands. Note, God's controversies with sinners do not fear a scrutiny; even Philistines and Egyptians will be made to see, and say, that the ways of the Lord are equal, but our ways are unequal. They are likewise summoned to attend, and to be present, and be witnesses for him that he deals fairly, but that they may themselves take warning; for if judgment begin at the house of God, as they see it does what shall be the end of those that are strangers to him? 1 Pet. iv. 17. If this be done in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry? Or, this intimates that the sin of Israel had been so notorious, that the neighbouring nations could come in witnesses against them, and therefore it was fit that their punishment should be so. If it could have been concealed, we would have said, Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon; but why should their friends consult their reputation, when they themselves do not consult it? If they are grown iniquitous in sin, let them bear the shame; publish it in Ashdod, in Ekron, in Ashkelon.

1. Let them see how black the charge is, and how well proved; let them observe the behaviour of the inhabitants of Samaria, let them look off from the adjacent hills, and they may see how rude and boisterous they are, and hear how loud the cry of their sin is, as was that of Sodom. (1.) Look into their streets, and you will see nothing but riot and disorder. (2.) Great tumults in the midst thereof; reason and justice are upon all occasions run down by the noise and fury of an outrageous mob; the dominion of which is the sin and shame of any people, and is likely to be their ruin. (3.) Look into their prisons, and you see them filled with injured innocents; the oppressed are in the midst thereof; thrown down and crushed by their oppressors; overpowered overpowered, and overwhelmed, and they had no compassion; Ezek. iv. 1. (3.) Look into their courts of justice, and they who preside in those courts, know no, do right, because they have always been accustomed to do wrong; they act as if they had no notion at all of the thing called justice, are in no care to do justice themselves, or to see that others do justice. (4.) Look into their treasuries and stores, and you see them filled with violence and robbery, with that which was unjustly got, and is still unjustly kept; thus they have heaped treasure together for the last days, but it will prove a treasure of wrath against the day of wrath. It may well be
said, These know not to do right, who think to enrich themselves by doing wrong.

2. Let them see how heavy the doom is, and how well executed, v. 11, 12. (1.) Their country shall be invaded and ruined; and observe how the punishment answers to the sin. [1.] Great tumults are in the midst of the land, and therefore an adversary shall be even round about the land; the Assyrians forces shall surround it, and break in upon it on every side. Note, When sin is harboured and indulged in the midst of a people, they can expect no other than that adversaries should be round about them, so that, go which way they will, they go into the mouth of danger, Luke xix. 43. [2.] They strengthened themselves in their wickedness, but the Lord strengthened his people, and their strength for them, that strength which they abused in oppressing the poor, and doing violence to all about them.

Note, That power which is made an instrument of unrighteousness, will justly be brought down and broken. [3.] They stored up robbery in their palaces, and therefore their palaces shall be spoiled; for what is got and kept wrongfully, will not be kept long, but will be the protection to fraud and oppression; but the greatest of men, if they have spoiled others, shall themselves be spoiled, for the Lord is the Avenger of all such. (2.) Their countrymen shall not escape, v. 12. They shall be in the hands of the enemy, as a lamb in the mouth of a lion, all devoured and eaten up, and they shall be used as such; the enemy and his slaves will make no do make their escape, so as neither to fall by the sword nor go into captivity, yet they shall be very few, and those of the meanest and least considerable, like two legs, or shanks, of a lamb, or, it may be, a piece of an ear, which the lion drops, or the shepherd takes from him, when he has eaten the whole body; so, perhaps, here and there one may escape. (3.) The king of Assyria shall fall upon them both, but none to make any account of: and those that do escape, it shall be with the utmost difficulty and hazard, by hiding themselves in the corner of a bed or under the bed’s feet; which intimates that their spirits shall be quite cowed and broken, and they shall sneek shamefully in the time of danger; they shall not hide themselves, as the people do, who live in the corner of a bed, or the piece of a bed, such as poor people must be content with. They shall very narrowly escape; as it is foretold concerning the last destruction of Jerusalem, that there shall be two in a bed together, one taken, and the other left. Note, When God’s judgments come forth against a people with commission, it will be in vain to think of escaping them. Some make their dwelling in the corner of a bed, and in a couch, to speak their present security and sensibility; they are at ease, as in a bed or on a couch, but when God comes to contend with them, he shall make them uneasy, shall take them away out of the bed of their sloth and slumber; those that stretch themselves lazily upon their couches when God’s judgments are abroad, shall go captive with the first that go captive.

II. Notice is given of it to themselves, v. 13. Let this be testified, and heard, in the house of Jacob, among all the seed of Israel, for it is spoken by the Lord God, the God of hosts, who has authority to pass this sentence, and ability to execute it; let them know from him, that the day is a day of visitation, a day of judgment, in which all those things they are proud of, and put confidence in, shall fail them, and so they shall smart for the sins they have been guilty of about them.

1. Wo to their altars, for God will visit them. He will inquire into the sins they have been guilty of at their altars, and bring into the account all their superstition and idolatry, all their expenses on their false gods, and all their expectations from them; and he will lay the altars themselves under the marks of his displeasure; for the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground, and with them the altar itself demolished, and broken to pieces. We find the altar at Bethel prophesied against, (1 Kings xli. 2.) and immediately rent; (v. 5.) and that prophecy fulfilled when Josiah burnt men’s bones upon it, 2 Kings xxviii. 15, 16. This here secures that prophecy, and seems to point at the same event. Note, If men will not destroy idolastrous altars, God will, and those with them that had them in veneration. Some make a show of the altar to signify all those things which they flee to for refuge, and trust in, and which they make their sanctuary; they shall all be cut off, so that they shall have nothing to take hold of.

2. Wo to their houses, for God will visit them too. He will inquire into the sins they have been guilty of in their houses, the robbery they have stored up in their houses, the luxury in which they lived; and (v. 15.) I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house. Their nobility, and gentry, and rich merchants, had their winter-houses in the city, and their summer-houses in the country; so nice were they in guarding against the inconveniences of the winter, when the country was thought too cold, and of the summer when the country was thought too hot; though the climate of that good land was so temperate, like that of ours, that neither the cold nor heat was ever in extremity. They indulged a foolish affectation of change and variety; but God will, either by war, or by the earthquake, smite both the winter-house and the summer-house; neither shall serve to shelter them from his judgments; if houses of ivory, so called because either to the celling or wainscot, or some of the ornaments of them, were edged or inlaid with ivory,) those shall perish, shall be burnt or pulled down, and the great houses shall have an end, the most splendid and spacious houses, the houses of their great men, they shall no longer be, or, at least, be no longer theirs. Note, The pomp and pleasantness of many houses will be so far from affecting God’s judgment, as will enhance it; God’s design shall be, that it will make them the more grievous and vexatious; as their extravagance about them will be put to the score of their sins and follies.

CHAP. IV.

In this chapter, I. The oppressors in Israel are threatened for their oppression of the poor, v. 1-5. II. The idolaters in Israel, being joined to idols, are given up to themselves, v. 6-8. III. All the sins of Israel are aggravated from their incorrigibilities in them, and their refusal to return and reform, notwithstanding the various rebukes of Providence, and evidences of the Divine displeasure against them, v. 9-11. IV. They are invited yet at length to humble themselves before God, since it is impossible for them to make their part good against him, v. 12, 13.

1. Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink. 2. The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks. 3. And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her; and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the Lord. 4. Come to Bethel and
transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years. 5. And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free-offerings; for this likeneth you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God.

It is here foretold, in the name of God, that oppressors shall be humbled, and idolaters shall be hardened.

1. That proud oppressors shall be humbled for their oppressions; for he that does wrong shall receive according to the wrong that he has done. Now observe—

How their sin is described. 1. They are compared to the king of Bashan, which were a breed of cattle very large and strong, especially if, though bred there, they were fed upon the mountain of Samaria, where the pastures were extraordinarily fat. Amos had been a herdsman, and he speaks in the dialect of his calling, comparing the rich and great men, that lived in luxury and wantonness, to the king of Bashan, which were wanton and unruly, walked about within the bounds of their own pasture, but broke through the hedges, broke down all the fences, and trespassed upon the neighbouring grounds; and not only so, but pushed and gored the lesser cattle that were not a match for him.

They that had their summer-houses upon the mountains of Samaria, when they went thither for fresh air, were as mischievous as the king upon the mountains of Bashan, and as injurious to those about them. (1.) They oppress the poor and needy themselves; they crush them, to squeeze something to themselves out of them. They take advantage of their poverty, and necessity, and inability to help themselves, to make them poorer, and more necessitous than they are. They make use of their power as judges and magistrates for the invading of men's rights and properties, the poor not excepted; for they made no conscience of robbing even the hospital. (2.) They are in conference with them that do so. They say to their masters, to the masters of the poor, that abuse them, and violently take from them what they have, when they ought to have relieved them, they say to them, "Bring, and let us drink, let us feast with you upon the gains of your oppression, and then we will protect you, and stand by you in it, and represent you as the powerful poor of the poor against you." Note, What is got by extortion is commonly made use of as provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof; and therefore men are tyrants to the poor, because they are slaves to their appetites; Bring, and let us drink, is the language of those that crush the needy, as if the tears of the oppressed, mingled with their wine, made it drink the better. And by their associations with the robbers, and blazing of ransoms, and an excess of riot, they strengthen their combinations for persecution and oppression, and harden the hearts of one another in it.

2. How their punishment is described. (v. 2, 3.) God will take them away with hooks, and their posterity with fish-hooks; he will send the Assyrian army upon them that shall make a prey of them, situations for drinking and revelling, and an excess of riot, but shall angle for particular persons, and take them prisoners and captives as with hooks and fish-hooks, shall draw them out of their own land as fish are drawn out of the water, which is their element, them and their children with them; or, They in their day shall be drawn out by one victorious enemy, and their posterity in their day by another; so that by a succession of destroying judgments they shall at length be wholly extirpated. These kings of Bashan thought they could no more be drawn out with a hook and a cord than the Leviathan can, Job xli. 1, 2. But God will make them know that he has a hook for their nose, and a bridle for their jaws, Isa. xxxix. 29. The enemy shall take them away as easily as the fisherman takes away the little fish, and shall make it their sport and recreation. When the enemy has made himself master of Samaria, then, (1.) Some shall attempt to escape by sea; Ye shall go out at the breaches made in the wall of the city, wherewith the enemy threatened her, to shift for her own safety, and make the best of their way; and now the unripe king of Bashan are tamed, and are themselves crushed, as they crushed the poor and needy. Note, Those to whom God has given a good pasture, if they are wanton in it, will justly be turned out of it; and those who shall not be kept within the hedges of God's precept, forfeit the benefit of the hedge of God's protection, and will be forced in vain to fly through the breaches they have themselves fearfully made in that hedge. (2.) Others shall think to shelter themselves, or, at least, their best effects, in the palace, because it is a castle well fortified and a garrison well mann'd; Ye shall throw yourselves, (so some read it,) or throw them, your posterity, your children, or whatever else is dear to you, into the breaches: I say, I will make my way, my will find it ready to be seized. Note, What is got by oppression cannot long be enjoyed with satisfaction.

3. How their sentence to this punishment is ratified; The Lord God has sworn it by his holiness; he had often said it, and they regarded it not, they thought God and his prophets did but jest with them; therefore he swears it in his wrath, and what he has sworn he will not revoke. He swears by his holiness, that attribute of his which is so much his glory, and which is so much glorified in the punishment of wicked people; far as sure as God is a holy God, they that pollute iniquity, and sow wickedness, shall reap the same.

11. That obstinate idolaters shall be hardened in their idolatries; (v. 4, 5.) Come to Bethel, and transgress. It is spoken ironically; "Do so, take your course, multiply your transgressions by multiplying your sacrifices, for this liketh you; but what will ye do in the end hereof?" Here we see, 1. How intent they were upon the service of their idols, and how willing they were to be at cost upon them; they brought their sacrifices, and their tithes, and their free-offerings, hoping that therein they should be accepted of God, but it was all an abomination to him. The profuseness of idolaters in the service of their false gods may shame our strait-handedness in the service of the true and living God. 2. How they mimicked God's institutions. They had their daily sacrifice at the altar of Bethel, as God had at his altar; they had their thank-offerings as God had, only they allowed the leaven in all of, which God had forbidden, because their priests did not like to have the bread so heavy and tasteless as it would be if it had not leaven in it, or something to ferment it. Holy bread would not serve them, unless it were pleasant bread. 3. How well pleased they were with these services themselves; This liketh you, O ye children of Israel. So ye love. What was their own invention the leaven in all of, which God had forbidden, because their priests did not like to have the bread so heavy and tasteless as it would be if it had not leaven in it, or something to ferment it. Holy bread would not serve them, unless it were pleasant bread. 4. How they are upbraided with it; "Come to Bethel, to Gilgal, bring the sacrifices and tithes yourselves, proclaim and publish to the nation the free-offerings, pressing them to bring in abundance of such, go on in this way." that is, (1.) "It is plain that you are not, or cannot be, in a condition, to do this, even as the science say to the contrary." (2.) "Your prophets shall let you alone in it, and not admonish you as they have done, for it is to no purpose; Let us man
6. And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. 7. And also I have withheld the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. 8. So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. 9. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens, and your vineyards, and your olive-trees increased, the palmer-worm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. 10. I have sent among you the pestilence, after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the sink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. 11. I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. 12. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. 13. For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The Lord, the God of hosts, is his name.

Here, 1. God complains of his people's insubordination under the judgments which he had brought upon them, in order to their humiliation and reformation. He had by several tokens intimated to them his displeasure, with this design, that they might by repentance make their peace with him; but it had not that effect. It is five times repeated in these verses, as the burden of the charge, "Yet have you not returned unto me, saith the Lord; you have been several times corrected, but in vain; you are not redeemed, there is no sign of amendment. You have been sent for by one messenger after another, but you have not come back, you have not come home." 1. This intimates that that which God designed in all his providential rebukes, was, to reduce them to their allegiance, to influence them to return to him. 2. That, if they had returned to their God, they should have been accepted, he would have bid them welcome, and the troubles they were in then, should have been removed, though we know why God sent further troubles, was, because former troubles had not done the work, otherwise it is no pleasure to the Almighty that he should afflict. 2. That God was grieved at their obscurity, and took it unkindly that they should force him to do that which he did so unwillingly; "You have not returned to me from your own will, you have not delighted; a messenger whom you are in covenant, to me who stand ready to receive you, to me who have so often called you." Now, to aggravate their incorrigibility, and to justify himself in inflicting greater judgments, he recounts the lesser judgments with which he had tried to bring them to repentance. (3.) There had sometimes been a scarcity of provision, though there was no visible cause of it. (v. 6.) "I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, for you had no meat to chew, whereby your teeth might be fouled," especially no flesh, which dirties the teeth; or emptiness of teeth, nothing to fill your mouths with. "Bread, the staff of life, has been wanting, for you have seen much and brought in little," as Hag. i. 9. Some think this refers to the seven years' famine that was in Elshah's time, which we read of, 2 Kings viii. 1. Now when God thus took away their corn in the season thereof, because they had prepared it for Baal, they should have said, We will go and return to our first hand, having paid dear for leaving him; but it had not that effect; They have not returned to me, saith the Lord. (4.) Sometimes they had wanted rain, and then of course they wanted the fruits of the earth. This evil was of the Lord; I have withholden the rain from you. God has the key of the clouds, and if he shut up, who can open? v. 7. The rain was withheld when there were yet three months to the harvest, at the time when they used to have it; and therefore the withholding of it was an extraordinary reasoning upon, and the course of nature was, that the rain must therein own the hand of the God of nature; and it was at a time when they most needed it, and therefore the want of it was a very sore judgment, and blasted their expectations of a crop at harvest. And one circumstance which made this very remarkable, was, that when there were some places that wanted rain, and withered for want of it, there were other places near adjoining that had it in abundance. God caused it to rain upon one city, and not upon another, in the same country; nay, he caused it to rain upon one field, one piece of a field, and it was thereby made fruitful and flourishing, but on the next field, on the other side of the hedge, nay, on another part of the same field, it rained not at all, and it was so long without rain, that all the products of it withered.

No doubt this was literally true, and there were many instances of it, which were generally taken notice of. Now, [1.] By this it appeared that the withholding of the rain was not casual, but by a divine direction and disposal; that the cloud which waters the earth is turned round about by the counsel of God, to do whatsoever he deepl demands it, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy, Job xxxvii. 12, 18. Rain does not go by planets, (as common people speak,) but as God sends it by his winds. [2.] We have reason to think that those cities on which it rained not, were the most infamous for wickedness, such as Bethel and Gilgal,

Vol. IV — 6 G
AMOS, IV.

(2. 4.) and that those on which it rained, were such as retained something of religion and virtue among them. And so in the towns it rained, or rained not, upon the piece, according as the owner was; for we are sure the curse of the Lord is in the house, and upon the ground, of the wicked, but he blesses the habitation of the just, and his field is a field that the Lord has blessed. [3.] It would be the greater grief and vexation to those whose fields withered for want of rain, that the rain fell where it might be most useful, and was watered and flourishing. My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry, Is. liv. 13. The wicked shall see it, and be grieved. Probably, those that were oppressed, were rained upon, and so they recovered their losses, while the oppressors withered, and so lost their gains. [4.] Yet as to the nation in general, it was a mixture of mercy with the judgment, and religion with sin; and, under this mixture of benevolence and reformation, and encouraged them to hope for all mercy, in their return to God, since there was so much mercy even in God's rebukes of them. But because they did not make a good use of this gracious alay to the extremity of the judgment, they had not the benefit of it, which otherwise they might have had, for (v. 8.) Two or three cities were at a distance, as beggars, to one city, to drink water, and to one city, to come home with them, but they were not satisfied; it was but here and there one city that had water, while many wanted, and then it was not, as usual, Deus communis aquarum—Water is free to all; they that had it, had occasion for it, or knew not how soon they might, and therefore could afford but little to them that wanted, saying, Let there be not enough for you and me. They that came from one dry city, but they were not satisfied, because they drank it by measure, and with astonishment; and they that drink of this water, shall thirst again, John iv. 15. They were not satisfied, because their desires were greedy, and what they had God did not bless to them, Hag. i. 6.

And now, one would think, when they met with all this disappointment, they should have considered their ways, and repented; but it had not that effect; "Yet have ye not returned to me, no, not so much as to pray in a right manner for the former and latter rain," Zech. x. 1. See the folly of carnal hearts; they will wander from city to city, from one creature to another, in pursuit of satisfaction, and still they miss of it; they labour for that which satisfies not, (Is. lviii. 9.) and yet, though they wander, the Lord, to will not incline their car to him in whom they might have satisfaction. The preaching of the gospel is as rain; God sometimes blesses one place with it more than another; some countries, some cities are, like Gideon's fleece, wet with this dew, while the ground about is dry; all others where this rain is wanting; but it were well if people were but as wise for their souls as these are for their bodies, and, while we have not this rain near them, we would go and seek it where it is to be had; if they seek aright, they shall not seek in vain.

(3.) Sometimes the fruits of their ground were eaten up by caterpillars, or blasted with mildew; (v. 9.) heaven and earth are armed against those who have made God their Enemy; when God pleased, that is, when he was displeased, [2.] They suffer for it; they are signally defaced by the elements, either too hot or too cold, blasted their fruits, with a force that could be neither discerned nor resisted, and against which there was no defence. [2.] They suffered by malignant animals. Their vineyards and gardens yielded their increase in great abundance, so did their fig-trees and olive-trees, but the, ranker-worm devoured them before the fruits were ripe, and fit to be gathered in; this was either the same judgment with that which we read of, Joel i. 4, 6, or a lesser judgment of the same nature, not before to give warning of that. But they did not take warning; Yet ye have not returned unto me. [4.] Sometimes the plague had raged among them, and the sword of war had cut off multitudes, v. 10. The pestilence is God's messenger, this he sent among them, with directions whom to strike dead, and it was done; it was a pestilence after the manner of Egypt; deaths were scattered among them in such a manner, that it was not only a trouble, but a surprise to them; perhaps this pestilence, as that of Egypt, fastened upon the first-born in the way of Egypt, so the margin; when they were making their escape to Egypt, or going thither to seek for aid, the pestilence seized them by the way, and stopped their journey. The sword of war is likewise the sword of the Lord; this was drawn among them with commission, and for the vindication of his glory, the strength of the present generation, and the seed of the next. God says, I have slain them; he avows the execution. The slain of the Lord are many. The enemy took away their horses, and converted them to their own use; and the dead carcasses of those that were slain either with sword or pestilence were so many, and for want of surviving friends, were left so long unburied, that the stench thereof arose into the tents of the Lord's people, and was both noisome and dangerous, and might put them in mind of the offensiveness of their sin to God. And yet this did not prevail to humble and reclaim them; You have not returned to him that smites you. Such a rag, woful sight as this, prevailed not to make them religious.

(5.) In these and other judgments some were remarkably cut off, and made monuments of justice, others were remarkably spared, and made monuments of mercy, the setting of which the one over against the other, one would have thought likely to work upon them, but it had not its effect, v. 11. [1.] Some were quite ruined, their families destroyed, and themselves in them; I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, perhaps consumed them with lightning, as Sodom was, or the houses were, some other way, burnt to the ground, and the inhabitants in them. Sodom and Gomorrah, are said to be consumed with an overthrow, and so made an example, 2 Pet. ii. 6. God had threatened to destroy the whole land with such an overthrow as that of Sodom, Dent. xxix, 23. But he began with some particular places first, because God's judgments begin at the children of the covenant, and go from thence to other persons, whose sins went before-hand to judgment. [2.] Others very narrowly escaped; Ye were many of you as a firebrand fluck out of the burning; like Lot out of Sodom, when the fire had already kindled upon you; and yet you hate sin never the more for the danger it has brought you to, nor love God ever the more for the fear of his judgments, as the Lord had so often been so signally delivered, and in such a distinguishing way, have not returned unto me."

II. God, in the close, calls upon his people, now at length, in this their day, to understand the things that belong to their peace, before they were hid from their eyes, v. 12, 13. Observe here,

1. How God threatens them with severer judgments than any they have hitherto suffered, unless they shall turn to him, in repentance. For, if you have been brought upon by correction hitherto, thus will I do unto thee, O Israel. He does not say how he will do, but it shall be something worse than had come yet. John v. 14. Or, Thus I will go on to do unto thee, following one judgment with another, like the plagues of Egypt, till I have made a full end. Nothing else but reformation will prevent the ruin of a sinful people; and if they turn not to him, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. I will punish you.
yet seven times more, if you will not be reformed; so it was written in the law, Lev. xxi. 24.

2. How he awakens them therefore to think of making their peace with God: "Seeing I will do this unto thee, and there is no remedy, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel;" that is, (1.) Consider, how unable thou art to meet him as a combatant. Some make it to be spoken by way of irony or challenge; "Prepare to meet God, who is coming forth to contend with thee; what armour of proof canst thou put on? What courage canst thou steel thyself with? Also, it is but putting bribery and thorns before a consuming Fire, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5. Art thou able with less than 10,000 men to withstand him that cometh forth against thee with more than 20,000?" Luke xiv. 31. (2.) "Resolve therefore to meet him as a penitent, as a humble suppliant; to meet him as thy God, in covenant with thee, to submit, and stand it out no longer." We must prepare to meet God in the way of his judgments, (Isa. xxvi. 8.) to take hold on his strength, that we may make peace. Note, Since we cannot flee from God, we are concerned to prepare to meet him; and therefore he gives us warning, that we may prepare. When we are to meet him in his ordinances, we must prepare to meet him, prepare to seek him.

3. How he sets forth the greatness and power of God as a reason why we should prepare to meet him, v. 15. If he be such a God as he is here described to be, it is folly to contend with him, and our duty and interest to make our peace with him; it is good having him our Friend, and bad having him our Enemy. (1.) He formed the mountains, made the earth, the strongest, statelyst parts of it, and by the word of his power still upholds it and them. Whatever are the products of the everlasting mountains, he formed them; whatever salvation is hoped for the winds and the waves shall he him. (3.) He declares unto man what is his thoughts; he makes known his counsel by his servants the prophets to the children of men, the thought of his justice against iniquitous sinners, and the thought of good he thinks toward those that repent. He can also make known, for he perfectly knows, the thought that is in man's heart; he understands it afar off, and in the day of conviction will set the evil thoughts among the other sins of sinners in order before them. (4.) He often makes the morning darkness, by thick clouds overspreading the sky immediately after the sun rose bright and glorious; so when we look for prosperity and joy, he can dash our expectations with some unexpected calamity. (5.) He treads upon the high places of the earth; is not only higher than the high, but he will tread all men under foot, and upon the idols which were worshipped in the highest places. (6.) Jehovah, the God of hosts is his name, for he has his being of himself, and is the Fountain of all being, and all the hosts of heaven and earth are at his command. Let us humble ourselves before this God, prepare to meet him, and give all diligence to make him our God, for happy the people whose God he is, who have all this power engaged for them.

CHAP. V.

The scope of this chapter is to prosecute the exhortation given to Israel in the close of the foregoing chapter, to prepare to meet his God; he here tells them, I. What preparation they must make; they must seek God, and love it, v. 14, 15. II. Why they must make this preparation to meet their God. 1. Because of the present deplorable condition they were in. v. 1, 2. Because they were sinners; they would not be able to meet him in such a condition, v. 7, 10, 12. Because it would be their happiness to seek God, and he was ready to be found of them, v. 8, 9, 14. Because he would proceed, in his wrath, to their utter ruin, if they did not seek him, v. 5, 6, 13, 16, 17. Because all their confidences would fail them, if they did not seek unto God, and make him their Friend, (1.) Their profane contempt of God's judgments, v. 20. (2.) Their profane readiness to secure them, v. 18, 20. (2.) Their external services in religion, and the shows of devotion, would not avail in turn away the wrath of God, v. 21, 24. (3.) Their loving being for a time in possession of those privileges, and in a course of holy duties, would not be their protection, while all along they had kept up their idolatrous customs, v. 25, 27. They have therefore no way left them to save themselves, but by repentance and reformation.

HEAR ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel. 2. The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up. 3. For thus saith the Lord God, The city that went out by a thousand shall leave a hundred, and that which went forth by a hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel.

This chapter begins, as these two next foregoing began, with, Hear this word. Where God has a mouth to speak, we must have an ear to hear; it is our duty, it is our interest; yet so stupid are most men, that they need to be again and again called upon to hear the word of the Lord; to give audience, to receive it into our hearts, and take deliberate and prayerful time to consider it. This all the more necessary, in that the awakened word must be heard and heeded, as well as words of comfort and peace; the word that is taken up against us, as well as that which makes for us; for, whether we hear or forbear, the word of God shall take effect, and not a little of it shall fall to the ground. It is the word which I take up—not the prophet only, but the God that sent him. It is the word that the Lord has spoken, ch. iii. 1.

The word to be heard is a lamentation, a lamentable account of the present calamitous state of the kingdom of Israel, and a lamentable prediction of its utter destruction. Their condition is sad; The virgin of Israel is fallen, (v. 2.) is come down from what she was; that state, though not pure and chaste as a virgin, yet was beautiful and gay, and had its charms; she looked high herself, and was courted by many as a virgin; but she is fallen into contempt and poverty, and is universally slighted; nay, and their condition is helpless; She shall no more rise, shall never recover her former dignity again. God had lately begun to cut Israel short, (2 Kings x. 32.) and because they repented not, it was not long before he cut Israel down, transplanted them. 1. Their princes, that should have helped them up, were disabled; She is forsaken upon her land. Not only those she was in alliance with abroad failed her, but her friends at home deserted her; she had not been carried captive into a strange land, if she had not first been forsaken upon her own bed, and they that were then gone abroad, and all her true interests abandoned by those that should have had them at heart. There is none to raise her up, none that can do it, none that cares to lend her a hand.

2. Their people, that should have helped them up, were diminished, v. 3. The city that had a multitude a thousand strong, and in the beginning of the war, had furnished out a thousand effective
men, able-bodied and well armed, when they come to review their troops after the battle, shall find but a hundred left; and, in proportion, the city that sent out a hundred, shall have but ten come back; so great a slaughter shall be made, and so few left to the house of Israel for the public service and safety. Scarcely one in ten shall escape of the hands that should relieve this abject, this dejected nation. Note, The lessening of the numbers of God's spiritual Israel by death or desertion, is just matter for lamentation; for by whom shall Jacob arise, by whom shall the decays of piety be repaired, when he is thus made small.

4. For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live. 5. But seek not Beth-El, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought. 6. Seek the Lord, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Beth-el.

7. Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth, 8. Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord is his name: 9. That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress. 10. They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly. 11. Forasmuch, therefore, as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat; ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. 12. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.

13. Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time. 14. Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. 15. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

This is a message from God to the house of Israel, in which,

1. They are told of their faults, that they might see what occasion there was for them to repent and reform, and that, when they were called to return, they might not need to ask, Wherein shall we return? God tells them in general, (v. 12.) "I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins; and you shall be made to know them too." In our penitent reflections upon our sins, we must consider, as God does in his judicial remarks upon them, and will do in the great day. 1. That they are very numerous; they are our manifold transgressions, sins of various kinds, and often repeated. O what a multitude of vain and vile thoughts lodge within us! What a multitude of idle, foolish, wicked words have been spoken by us! In what a multitude of instances have we gratified and indulged our corrupt appetites and passions! And how many are our omissions of duty, and in duty! Who can compute the number of the transgressions, and the manifold number of the sins of our own? 2. That some of them are very heinous; they are our mighty sins; sins that are more exceeding sinful in their own nature, and by being committed presumptuously, and with a high hand; sins against the light of nature, flagrant crimes, that are mighty to overpower your convictions, and to pull down judgments upon you.

We see some of these mighty sins. (1.) They corrupted the worship of God, and turned to idols; that is implied, v. 5. They had sought to Bethel, where one of the golden calves was; they had frequented Gilgal, a place which they chose to set up idols in, because it had been made famous in the days of Joshua by God's wonderful appearances to, and for, his people. Beer-sheba likewise, a place that had been famous in the days of the patriarchs, was now another rendezvous of idols; as we find also, ch. viii. 14. And thither they passed, though it lay at a distance, in the land of Judah. Now, having thus shamefully gone a whoring from God, no doubt they should have felt themselves concerned to return to him. (2.) They perverted justice among themselves; (v. 7.) "Ye turn judgment to wormwood; ye make your administations of justice bitter and nauseous, and highly displeasing both to God and man." That fruit is become a weed, a weed in the garden; as nothing is more venerable, nothing more valuable, than justice duly administered, so nothing is more hateful, nothing more abominable, than designedly doing wrong, under colour and pretence of doing right. Corrupti optimi est fascinatio. The best vices are beguiled, because the worst. Ye have off righteousness in the earth; as if those that do wrong were accountable to the God of heaven only, and not to the princes and judges of the earth; thus it was as before the flood, when the earth was filled with violence. (3.) They were very oppressive to the poor, and made them poorer; they tread upon the poor, (v. 11.) trampled upon them, lacerated over them, to make them the foot-stool of their feet. The poor, most impious and barbarous to these that were most obsequious and submissive; they cared not what shame and slavery they put them to who were poor, and such as they could get nothing by. That was it that the judges aimed at, nothing but to enrich themselves; and therefore they took from the poor hurtles of wheat, took it by extortion, or by the way of them, their last bread. They put no other way to save themselves from being trodden upon, and trodden to dirt, by them, than by presenting to them horse-heads of that corn which they and their families should have had to subsist upon; and they forced them to do it. They took from the poor debts of wheats; so some read it. It was legally due either for rent or for corn lent, but they exacted it with rigour from those who were disabled by the providence of God to pay it, as Neh. v. 2, 5. In demanding and recovering even of a just debt, we
their word; righteous
Their prudent
And they, Men
what they, fasten to the edge of the law and of the sword of justice against those that are the innocent and quiet in the land; they therefore hated men, because they were more righteous than themselves, and he that departed from evil, thereby made himself a prey to them. They take a bride from the rich to patronize and protect them in opposing the poor; so that he who made the law, was judge and judgment on his side, be his cause ever so bad. Thus they turn aside the poor in the gate, in the courts of justice, from their right. If the poor sue for their right, who cannot bribe them, or are so honest, that they will not, though they have it ever so clear in view, and ever so near, yet they are turned away from it by their unrighteous sentence, and cannot come at it. And therefore the prudent will keep silence, v. 13. Men will reckon it their prudence, when they are wronged and injured, to be silent, and make no complaints to the magistrates, for it will be to no purpose, they shall not have justice done them. (4) They were malicious persecutors of God's faithful ministers and people, v. 10. Their hearts were so fully set in them to do evil, that they found them out under the ministry of the word, by the reading and expounding of the law, and the messages which the prophets delivered to them, in the name of the Lord. They hate him that rebukes in the gate, in the gate of the Lord's house, or in their courts of justice, or in the places of concourse, where wisdom is lifting up her voice, Prov. i. 21. Reprovers in the gate are reprovers by office; these they hated, as their enemies, because they told them the truth, as Ahab hated Micaiah. They not only despised them, but had an enmity to them, and sought to do them mischief. Those that hate reproof, love ruin. [2] By the conversation of their honest neighbours. Though things were generally very bad, yet there were some among them that spake uprightness, that made conscience of what they said, and as it was their praise, so it was the shame of those that spake deceitfully, and condemned them, as Noah's faith condemned the unbelief of the old world, and for that reason they abhorred them; they were such inveterate enemies to the thing called honesty, that they could not endure the sight of an honest man.

But another cause of the common interest of mankind, will love and value such as speak uprightly, for veracity is the bond of human society; to what a pitch of folly and madness then were they arrived, who, having banished all notions of justice out of their own hearts, would have them banished out of the world too, and so put mankind an end of for ever. Fie! fie! how they should think it dangerous to complain, and therefore shall keep silence; this was one way in which they afflicted the just, that by false suggestions and strained iniquities they made men offenders for a word; (Isa. xix. 21.) and therefore the prudent, who were wise as serpents, because they knew not how what they said might be misunderstood and misrepresented, and in the end hurt them, take upon them to run themselves into a trap, by their wisdom, because it was an evil time. Note, Through the iniquity of the times, as good men are hid, so good men are silent, and it is their wisdom to be so; little said soon amended. But it is their comfort that they may say what they will freely, and they can speak freely. Secondly, They shall think it fruitless to reproove. They see what wickedness is committed, and their spirits are stirred up, as Paul's at Athens; but they shall think it prudent not to bear an open testimony against it, because it is to no purpose. They are joined to their idols, let them alone. Let no man strive or rebuke another; for it is written, casting aspersions, and casting aspersions, they shall say, (b.) and men will say to a bold reprover, as Erasmus to Luther, Abi in cellam, et dic, Misereere mei, Domine—Away to thy cell, and cry, Have mercy on me, O Lord. Let grave lessons and counsels be kept for better men, and better times. And there is a time to keep silence as well as a time to speak; Excl. iii. 7. Evil times will not bear plain dealing; that is, evil men will not. And the men the prophet here speaks of, had reason to think themselves evil men indeed, when wise and good men thought it vain to speak to them, and were afraid of having any thing to do with them.

II. They are told of their danger, and what judgments they lay exposed to for their sins. 1. The places of their idolatry are in danger of being ruined. The first place speaks of Jerusalem. The temple, the site of idolatry, shall go into captivity; not only its inhabitants, but its images, and Bethel with its golden calf, shall come to naught. The victorious enemy shall make nothing of it, so easily shall it be spoiled; and shall bring it to nothing, so effectually shall it be spoiled. Idols were always vanity, and things of naught, and so they shall prove when God appears to abolish them. 2. The body of the kingdom is in danger of being ruined with them, v. 6. There is danger, lest, if you seek him not in time, he break out like a fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it; for our God is a righteous Judge, is a consuming fire, and the men of Israel, as criminals, are stubble before him; wo to those that make themselves fuel to the fire of God's wrath! It follows, And there shall be none to quench it in Bethel; there their idols were, and their idolatrous priests, thither they brought their sacrifices, and there they offered up their prayers; but God tells them that when the fire of his judgments kindles upon them, all the gods they served at Bethel should not be able to quench it, should not turn away the judgment, or be any relief to them under it. Thus they might make an idol of the wood, the stones, and the dust of the pleasant vineyards, have contrived how to make them every way agreeable, and have promised yourselves many a pleasant walk in them: but you shall be forced to walk off, and shall never drink wine of them.

The law had tenderly provided that if a man had built a house, or planted a vineyard, he should be at his liberty to return from the wars, Deut. xx. 5, 6. But now the necessity would be so urgent, that it would not be allowed, all must go to the battle, and many of those who had lately been building and planting, should fall in battle, and never enjoy what they had been labouring for. What is not honestly got is not likely to be long enjoyed.

III. They are told of the danger, and have great encouragement to set about it in good earnest, and good reason. The duties here prescribed to them are, godliness and honesty, seriousness in their applica-
tions to God, and justice in their dealings with men; and each of these is here pressed upon them with proper arguments, before they are to be disposed of. 4. They are here exhorted to be sincere and devout in their addresses to God, v. 4. God says to the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and with good reason; for should not a people seek unto their God? Isa. viii. 19. Whither else should they go but to their Protector? Israel was a prince with God; let his descendants seek the Lord, as he did, and they shall find the Lord. Now, however fond they may, in making up their minds they must abandon their idolatries. God is not sought truly, if he he not sought only, for he will enure no rivals; "Seek ye the Lord, and seek not Bethel, (v. 5.) consult not your idol-records, nor ask at the mouth of the priests of Bethel; seek not to the golden calf there for protection, nor bring your prayers and sacrifices any longer thither, or to Gilgal, for you forswake your own mercies, if you observe these lying vanities. But seek the Lord; (v. 6, 8.) inquire after him, inquire of him; seek to know his mind as your rule, to secure his favour as your felicity. To press this exhortation, we are bid to consider, (1.) What we shall get by seeking God; it will be our life, we shall find him, and shall be happy in him. So he tells them himself, (v. 4.) Seek ye me, and ye shall live. So the prophet tells them, Go up to Bethel, and we shall eat. They that seek perishing gods, shall perish with them, (v. 5) but they that seek the living God, shall live with him: "You shall be delivered from the killing judgments which you are threatened with; your nation shall live, shall recover from its present languishings; your souls shall live, you shall be sanctified and comforted, and made for ever blessed; Ye shall live." (2.) What a God he is, whom we are to seek, v. 8, 9.

1. He is a God of almighty power himself. The idols were impotent things, could do neither good nor evil, and therefore it was folly either to fear or trust them; but the God of Israel does every thing, and can do any thing, and therefore we ought to seek to him; he challenges our homage, who has all power in his hand, and it is our interest to have him on our side.

Divers proofs and instances are here given of God's power, as Creator, in the kingdom of nature, as both founding and governing that kingdom. Compare ch. iv. 13. First, The stars are the work of his hands; those stars which the heathens worshipped, (v. 26.) the stars of your god, these stars are God's creatures among the creatures. He made the seven stars and Orion, two very remarkable constellations, which Amos, a heathen, while he kept his cattle by night, had particularly observed the motions of. He made them at the first, he still makes them to be what they are to this earth; and either binds or looses the sweet influences of Pleiades and Orion, the two constellations here mentioned, (Job xxxviii. 31.—35.) 9.) to which passages Amos seems to refer, and which were ancient discoveries of the glory of God before he was called the God of Israel. Secondly, The constant succession of day and night is under his direction, and is kept up by his power and providence. It is he that turns the night (which is dark as the shadow of death,) into the morning by the rising of the sun, and by the setting of the sun makes the day dark as night. He can by his power and intervenable penitents, easily turn affliction and sorrow into prosperity and joy, but can as easily turn the prosperity of presumptuous sinners into darkness, into utter darkness. Thirdly, The rain rises and falls as he appoints. He calls for the waters of the sea; out of them vapours are drawn up by the heat of the sun, which gather into clouds, and are poured out upon the face of the earth, to water it, and make it fruitful. This was the mercy that had been withheld from them of late; (ch. iv. 7.) and therefore to whom should they apply their prayers but to him who had power to give it? For all the vanities of the heathen could not give rain, nor could the heavens of themselves give showers. Jer. xiv. 22. It is God that has made these things; Jehovah is his name; the name by which the God of nature, the God of the whole earth, has made himself known to his people Israel, and covenanted with them for the preservation of it. [2.] As he is a God of almighty power himself, so he gives strength and power unto his people that seek him, and renews strength to those that had lost it, if they wait upon him for it; for (v. 9.) he strengthens the spoiled against the strong, to such a degree, that the spoiled come against the fortress, and make bold and brave attacks upon those that had spoiled them. The Lord makes people to seek the Lord, that if they do so, they shall find him able to retrieve their affairs, when they are brought to the lowest ebb; though they are the spoiled, and their enemies are the strong, if they can but engage God for them, they shall soon recruit so as the next time to be: not only the aggressors, but the conquerors; they come against the fortress, to make reprisals, and become victors. [2.] They are here exhorted to be honest and just in their dealings with men, (v. 14, 15.) where observe,

(1.) The duty required; Seek good, and not evil. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate; re-establish it there, whence it has been banished, v. 7. Note, Things are not so bad but that they may be amended, if the right course be taken; we must not despise but try, that grievances may be redressed, and abuses rectified; justice may yet triumph there where injustice tyrannizes. In order to this, good must be loved and sought, evil must be hated, and no longer sought. We must love good principles, and adhere to them, love to do good, and abound in it; love good people, and good converse; and good duties; and, whatever good we do, we must do it from a principle of love; do it of choice and with delight. They who thus love good, will seek it, will contrive to do all the good they can, inquire for opportunities to do it, and endeavour it to the utmost of their power. They will also hate evil, will abhor the thought of doing an unjust thing, and abstain from all appearance of it.

In vain do we pretend to seek God in our devotions, if we do not seek good in our whole conversations.
to make the nation happy: "If you seek and love that which is good, you may contribute to the saving of the land from ruin." It may be, the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph; though there is but a remnant left, if God be gracious to that remnant, it will rise to a great nation again; and if some among them turn from sin, especially if judgment be established in the gate, though we cannot be certain, yet there is a great probability, that public affairs will take a new and happy turn, and every thing will mend if men mend their lives. Temporal promises are made with an It may be; and our prayers must be made accordingly.

16. Therefore the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus. Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! And they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to waiting. 17. And in all vineyards shall be wailing; for I will pass through thee, saith the Lord. 18. Wo unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. 19. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. 20. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?

Here is,

1. A very terrible threatening of destruction approaching, v. 15, 17. Because they would not take the right course to obtain the favour of God, God would take an effectual course to make them feel the weight of his displeasure. The threatening is introduced with more than ordinary solemnity, to strike an awe upon them; it is not the word of the prophet only, (if so, it might be made light of,) but it is the Lord Jehovah, who has an infinite, eternal being, it is the God of hosts, who has a boundless, irresistible power, and it is Adonai—the Lord, who has an absolute, incomprehensible, and universal dominion, is he who says it, who can and will make his words good, and he has said, 1. That the land of Israel shall be put in mourning, true mourning; that all places shall be filled with lamentation for the calamities coming upon them. Look into the cities, and wailing shall be in all streets, in the great streets, in the by-streets. Look into the country, and they say all in the highways. Alas! alas! we are all undone! The lamentation shall be so great, as not to be confined within doors, nor kept within the bounds of decency, but it shall be proclaimed in the streets and highways, and shall run wild. The husbandman shall be called from the plough by the calamities of his country to the natural expressions of mourning; and because they will come short of the merits of that cause, such as are skilful of lamentation shall be called to artificial mourning, to put accents upon the lamentations of the real mourners with their Ahone, alone. Even in all the vineyards, where there used to be nothing but mirth and pleasure, there shall be general wailing, when a foreign force invades the country, lays all waste, and there is not making any head against it, no weapons left but prayers and tears. 2. That the land of Israel shall be brought to ruin, and the advances of that ruin are the occasion of all this wailing; I will pass through thee, as the destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt to destroy the first-born, but then passed over the houses of the Israelites. God's judgments had often passed by them, but now they shall pass through them, shall run them through.

11. A just and severe reproof to those who made light of these threatenings, and impatiently bid defiance to the justice of God and his judgments, v. 18. Wo unto you that desire the day of the Lord, that really wish for times of war and confusion, as some do who have restless spirits, and long for changes, or who choose to fish in troubled waters, hoping to raise their families, as some had done, upon the ruins of their country; but the prophet tells them that this should be so great a desolation, that nobody could get by it. Or, it is spoken to those who, in their writings and lamentations for the calamities they were in, wished they might be spared, and he rid out of their misery; as Job did, with passion. The prophet shows them the folly of this. Do they know what death is to those who are unprepared for it, and how much more terrible it will be than any thing that can befal them in this life? Or, rather, it is spoken to those who speak jestingly of the day of the Lord, who do not take it seriously; they desired it, they challenged it; they said, Let him do his worst, let him make speed, and hasten his work, Isa. v. 19. Where is the promise of his coming? 2 Pet. iii. 4. It intimates, 1. That they do not believe it. They say that they wish it would come, because they do not believe it will ever come; nor will they believe it unless they see it. 2. That they do not fear it; though they read and make some belief of it, yet they have so little consideration of it, and their mind is so intent upon other things, that they are under no apprehension at all of their peril from it; instead of having the conscience to dread it, they have the curiosity to desire it. In answer to this,

1. (1.) He shows the folly of those who impatiently wished for any of God's judgments: "To what end is it for you that the day of the Lord should come? You will find it but certain and sad; not a thing to be bantered, for it is neither a thing to be questioned whether it will come or no, nor a thing to be turned off with a slight when it does come. The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light, v. 18. Shall it be feared, v. 20. Do they consider it at all, they are so secure, and what science tells you that it will be so, that it will be very dark, and no brightness in it?" Note, The day of the Lord will be a dark, dismal, gloomy day to all impenitent sinners; the day of judgment will be so; and sometimes the day of their present trouble. And when God makes a day dark, all the world cannot make it light. 2. (2.) He shows the folly of those who impatiently wished for a change of God's judgments, in hopes that the next will be better and more tolerable. They desire the day of the Lord, in hopes to mend themselves, (though their hearts and lives be not amended,) or, however, to know the worst. But the prophet tells them that they know not what they ask, v. 19. It is as if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him, a beast of prey more cruel and ravenous than a lion. Or as if a man, to escape all dangers abroad, went into the house for security, and leaned his hand on the wall to rest himself, and there a serpent bit him. Note, Those who are not reformed by the judgments of God, will be pursuited by them; and if they escape one, another stands ready to seize them; fear, and the fit, and a snare follow them. They who are not mended, must, therefore to defy the day of the Lord.

21. I hate, I despise your feast-days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies,
22. Though ye offer me burnt-offerings, and your meat-offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. 23. Take them away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. 24. But, let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. 25. Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? 26. But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chinn your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. 27. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts.

The scope of these verses is to show how little God valued their shows of devotion, nay, how much he detested them, while they went on in their sins. Observe,

1. **How unpleasing, nay, how displeasing, their hypocritical services were to God.** They had their burnt-offerings at Bethel, in imitation of those at Jerusalem, in which they pretended to rejoice before God; they had their solemn assemblies for religious worship, in which they put on the gravity of those who came before God, as his people, and sit before him as his people sit; they offered to God burnt-offerings, to the honour of God, together with the meat-offerings which by the law were to be offered with them; they offered the peace-offerings, to improve the favour of God, and they offered them of the fat beasts that they had, v. 21, 22. In imitation likewise of the temple-music, they had the voice of their songs, and the melody of their viols, (v. 23.) vocal and instrumental music, with which they praised God; with these services they hoped to make God amends for the sins they had committed, and to obtain leave to go to Bethel, and therefore trusted that they were pleasing to God; but they were abominable. He hated, he despised, their feast-days, not only despised them as no valuable services done to him, but hated them as an affront and provocation to him, as we hate to see men assemble with us, pretend a respect for us, when really they have none.

Nothing more hateful, more despisable, than hypocrisy; he that blessed his friend with a loud voice, it shall be counted a curse, when it appears that his heart is not with him. God will not smell in their solemn assemblies, for there is nothing in them that is grateful to him, but a great deal that is offensive. Their sacrifices are not to him of a sweet-smelling savour, as Noah's was, Gen. viii. 21. He will not accept them, he will not regard them, will not take note of them, because he will not hear the melody of their viols; for when sin is a jar in the human heart, it grates in his ears; "Take it away," says God, "I cannot bear it." Now this speaks, (1.) That sacrifice itself is of small account with God, in comparison with moral duties; to love God and our neighbour is better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifice. (2.) That the sacrifice of the wicked is really an abomination to him, Prov. xxvii. 3. Dissembled piety is doubly iniquity, and so it will be found, when, any place in hell be better than other, that will be the hypocrite's portion.

2. What it was that he required in order to the acceptableness of their sacrifices, and without which no sacrifice would be acceptable; (v. 24.) Let judgment run down as waters among you, and righteousness as a mighty stream. (1.) "Let there be a general reformation of manners among you; let religion, God's judgment and righteousness, have their due influence upon you. You are now drenched with corruption, and let it be furred with, and let it hear down all the opposition of vice and profaneness; let it run wide as overflowing waters, and yet run strong as a mighty stream." (2.) "In particular, let justice be duly administered by magistrates and rulers; let not the current of it be stopped by partiality and bribery, but let it come freely as waters do, in the natural course, let it be more as the waters, not withed with corruption, or whatever may pervert justice; let it run like a mighty stream, and not suffer itself to be obstructed, or its course retarded by the fear of man; let all have free access to it as a common stream, and have benefit by it, as trees planted by the rivers of waters." The great thing laid to Israel's charge was, turning judgment into wormwood; (v. 7.) in that matter therefore they must reform, Zech. vii. 9. This was it that God desired more than sacrifices, Hos. vi. 6. 1 Sam. xv. 22.

3. What little stress God had laid upon the law of sacrifices, though it was his own law, in comparison with the moral precepts; (v. 25.) Did we offer unto me sacrifices in the wilderness forty years? No, you did not; for the greatest part of that time sacrifice was very much neglected, because of the necessities of that land. When the law was not received by the passover was not kept till they were come into Canaan, and other institutions were in like manner intermitted; and yet, because God will have mercy and not sacrifice, he never imputed the emission to them as their fault, but continued his care of them, and kindness to them; it was not that, but their murmuring and unbelief, for which God was displeased with them. He that so owned his gifts, though they did not sacrifice, when in other things they kept close to him, will certainly discover them, though they do sacrifice, if in other things they depart from him. But though ritual sacrifices may thus be dispensed with, spiritual sacrifices will not; even justice and honesty will not excuse for the want of prayer and praise, a broken heart, and the love of God, Acts xxvii. 24. It would be to show that we are still in the wilderness to think that the ceremonial law was repealed, when from the beginning it was comparatively made light of. Compare Jer. vii. 22, 23.

4. What little reason they had to expect that their sacrifices should be acceptable to God, when they and their fathers had been all along addicted to the worship of other gods. So take note, v. 25, Did you offer to me sacrifices, to ME only? No, and therefore not at all to ME acceptably: for the law of worshiping the Lord our God, is, Him only we must serve. "But you have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch, (v. 26.) little shrines that you made to carry about with you, pocket- idols for your private superstition, when you durst not be seen to do it publicly. You have had the images of Ashtaroth, (v. 25.) graven gods that walked the earth, the sun, that sits king among the heavenly bodies, ("and Chinn, or Remphan;" as Stephen calls it, Acts vii. 43. after the IXX. which, it is supposed, represented Saturn, the highest of the seven planets. The worship of the sun, moon, and stars, was the most ancient, most general, and most plausible idolatry; they made to themselves the star of their god, some part of the diameter of the sun to be their god, or the name of which they gave to their god. This idolatry Israel was from the beginning prone to; (Dont, iv. 19.) and those that retain any affection for false gods, cannot expect the favour of the true God.

5. What punishment God would inflict upon them for their persisting in idolatry; (v. 27.) I will cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus. They
were led captive by Satan into idolatry, and therefore God caused them to go into captivity among idolaters, and hurried them into a strange land, who were so fond of strange gods. They were carried beyond Damascus; their captivity by the Assyrians was far beyond that by the Syrians; for if lesser judgments do not work that for which they were sent, God will send greater. Or, the captivity of Israel under Nebuchadrezzar was far beyond that of Damascus under Tiglath-pileser, and much more grievous and destructive, which was foretold, ch. i. 5. For, as the sins of God's professing people are greater than the sins of others, so it may be expected that their punishments will be proportionable. We find the spoil of Damascus, and that of Samaria, carried off together by king of Assyria, Is. vili. 3.

4. Stephen reads it, I will carry you away beyond Babylon, (Acts vii. 43.) further than Judah shall be carried, so far further, as not to return. And, to make this sentence appear both the more certain, and the more dreadful, he that passes it himself, the Lord, whose name is, The God of hosts, and who is therefore able to execute the sentence, having hosts at command.

CHAP. VI.

In this chapter we have, 1. A single people studying to put a slight on God's privileges, and to make them appear trivial; confiding in their privileges and pre-eminent above other nations, (v. 2, 3.) and their power, (v. 13.) and wholly addicted to their pleasures, v. 4. 6. II. A character drawn to put a mark upon God's threatened, and to make them appear terrible, by setting forth the severity of those judgments that were coming upon those sensualists; (v. 7.) God's abhorring them, and abandoning them and their decease, (v. 8. 11.) and bringing utter desolation upon them, since they would not be wakened upon the methods he had taken for their conviction, v. 12. 14.

Wo to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came! 2. Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms! or their border greater than your border? 3. Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; 4. That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; 5. That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David; 6. That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. 7. Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.

The first words of the chapter are the contents of these verses; but they sound very strange, and contrary to the sense of a vulgar version, which puts the words in a different manner. It is, They are gone captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.

Their bodies, and make much of them; but against them this word is denounced, and we are here told what their case is, and what the word is.

1. Here is a description of their pride, security, and sensuality, for which God would reckon with them.

1. They were vainly coveted of their own dignities, and thought those would vainly secure them from the judgments threatened, and be their defence against the wrath both of God and man. (1.) Those that dwell in Zion, thought that was honour and protection enough for them, and they there be quiet from all fear of evil, because it was a strong city, well fortified both by nature and art, (we read of Zion's strong holds, and her mighty walls, Jer. x. 26.) but if it were so, it was but a shew, they were set the thrones of the house of David; it was the head-city of Judah, and therefore truly great; and especially because it was the holy city where the temple was, and the testimony of Israel; that they dwelt there doubted not but that God's sanctuary would be a sanctuary to them, and would shelter them from his judgments. The temple of the Lord are those verses, Jer. iv. 4. They are haughty because of the holy mountain, Zeph. iii. 11. Note, Many are puffed up with pride, and reckoned asleep in carnal security, by their church-privileges, and the place they have in Zion. (2.) Those that dwelt in the mountain of Samaria, though it was not a holy hill, like that of Zion, yet they trusted in it, because it was the metropolis of a potent kingdom, and, perhaps, the head-quarters of religion, and the seat of the first-fruits of the nations, (so the word is,) dedicated to God, and sanctifying the whole harvest. The house of Israel came to them, was divided into those kingdoms, and Samaria were the mother-cities of those. These that were at ease, were the princes and rulers, the great men, that were chief of the nations, chief of these two kingdoms, and to whom belonged their honour and glory. But, the house of Israel applied themselves for judgment. Note, It is hard to be great, and not to be proud. Great nations and great men are apt to overvalue themselves, and to overlook their neighbours, because they think they a little overtop them. But, for a check to their pride and security, the prophet bids them take notice of these cities that were within the compass of their knowledge, that had been as illustrious in their time as ever Zion or Samaria was, and yet were destroyed, v. 2. Go to Calneh, (which was an ancient city built by Nimrod, Gen. x. 10.) and see what is become of that, it is now in ruins; so is Hamath the great, one of the chief cities of Syria; Senacherrub boasts of destroying the gods of the Nether, Ezek. x. 14. But, he was likewise made desolate by Hiel, and not long ago, 2 Kings ix. 17. Now were they better than these kingdoms of Judah and Israel? Yes, they were, and their border greater than your border, so that they had more reason to you than to be confident of their own safety: yet you see what is become of them, and dare you be secure? Art thou better than populous No? Not iii. 8. Note, the examples of others' ruin forbids us to be secure.

2. They persisted in their wicked courses, upon a presumption that they should never be called to an account for them; (v. 3.) "You put far away the evil day, the day of reckoning, as a thing that shall never come; or, you look upon it as at such a distance,
that it makes no impression at all upon you; you put it far away, and think you can still put it yet further, and adjourn it to die in diem—from day to day, and thereby you can make out of violence to drink no ye venture upon all acts of injustice and oppression, and have fellowship with the throne of iniquity, which frames mischief by a law, Ps. cxxv. 20. "You cause that to come near, as if that would be your protection from these judgments, which really ripens you for them." Note, Therefore men take sin to be near them, because they take judgment to be far off from them; but they cannot play away, who thus mock God.

3. They indulged themselves in all manner of sensual pleasures and delights, v. 4. 6. These Israelites were perfect epicures and slaves to their appetites. Their dignities, (in consideration of which they ought to have been examples of self-denial and mortification,) they thought, would justify them in their sensuality: the gains of their oppression and violence, they thought, would bear the charge of it; and they put the evil day at a distance, that that might give them no disturbance in it.

That which they are here charged with, is not in itself sinful, (these things might be soberly and moderately used,) but they placed their happiness in the gratification of their carnal appetites; and though they were men in office, that had business to do, and yet they spent their time in them, and threw away their thoughts, and cares, and estates, upon them; they were in these enjoyments as in their element; their hearts were upon them, they exceeded all bounds in them, and this at a time when God in his providence was calling them to weeping and mourning. (Isa. xxii. 12, 13.) when they were under guilt and war, and their judgments of God were ready to break upon them, they called for wine and strong drink, presuming that to-morrow shall be as this day and much more abundant, (Isa. lvi. 12.) thus walking contrary to God, and setting his justice at defiance.

1. They were extravagant in their furniture; nothing would serve them but beds of ivory, to sleep upon, or to sit on at their meat, when sackcloth and ashes had better become them. (2.) They were disorderly in their eating, (which is a case of ease;) they did not only lie down, but stretched themselves upon their couches, when they should have stirred up themselves to their business; they were willingly slothful, and took a pride in doing nothing; they abounded in superfluities, (so the margin reads it,) when many of their poor brethren wanted necessaries.

3. They were nice and curious in their diet, must have every thing of the best, and abundance of it; they eat the lambs out of the flock, (lambs by wholesale,) and the calves out of the midst of the stall, the fattest they could lay their hand on; and these perhaps not out of their own flock and their own stall, but taken by oppression from the poor.

4. They were merry and jovial, and diverted themselves at their feasts with music and singing; they have their instruments in concert, and they invent new-fashioned instruments of music, straining herein, more than in any thing else, to excel their ancestors; they set their wits on work to contrive how to please their fancy. Some men never show their ingenuity but in their luxury; on that they bestow all their faculty of invention and contrivance. They invent instruments of music, like David; entertainment seasons with the tune of the voice, and for the entertainment of kings only. Or, it intimates their profligacy in their mirth; they mimicked the temple-music, and made a jest of that, because, it may be, it was old-fashioned, and they took a pride in bantering it, as the Babylonians did when they urged the captives to sing him the songs of Zion; such was Belshazzar's profaneness, when he drank wine in temple-bowls, and such theirs that sing vain and loose songs in psalm tunes, on purpose to ridicule a divine institution.

5. They drink to excess, and never think there is no room for the thought; they drink wine in bowls, not in glasses or cups; (as Jer. xxxiv. 5.) they hate to be hinted, and must have large draughts, and therefore make use of vessels, that they can steal a draught out of. (6.) They affect the strongest perfumes; they anoint themselves with the chief ointments, to please the smell, and to make them more in love with their own bodies, and to guard against those they thought use by which they carry about with them while they live. No ordinary ointments would serve their turn; they must have the chief, such as were far-fetched and dear-bought, when cheaper would have served as well.

4. They had no concern at all for the interests of the church of God, and of the nation, that were sinking, and going to decay; They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph; the church of God, including both the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, (which are called Joseph, Ps. lxxx. 1.) was in distress, invaded, insulted, and broken in upon; their own kingdom which they were intrusted with the government of, the affairs of which they were the directors of, the peace of which they were the conservators of; but it is not upon their hearts, upon its peace and welfare; and they were so besotted, that they were not aware of them, so indulgent of their pleasures, that they never laid them to heart, and had such an aversion to the thing called business, that they were in no care or concern to get them repaired. It is all one to them whether the nation sink or swim, so that they can but lie at ease, and live in pleasure.

Particular persons that belonged to Joseph, were in affliction, and they took no cognizance of their case, of the wrings and hardships they sustained, and the troubles they were in, nor took any care to relieve them and right them; contrary to the temper of holy Job, who, when he was in prosperity, wept with him that was in misery, and his soul was grieved for the poor, Job xxx. 25. Some think that in calling the afflicted church Joseph, (unless, they mean it as a name of authority given to them,) when they longed to Joseph, were in affliction, and they took no cognizance of their case, of the wrongs and hardships they sustained, and the troubles they were in, nor took any care to relieve them and right them; contrary to the temper of holy Job, who, when he was in prosperity, wept with him that was in misery, and his soul was grieved for the poor, Job xxx. 25. Thus they drank wine in bowls, but were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Note, Those are commonly careless of the troubles of others, who are set upon their own pleasures; and it is a great offence to God when his church is in affliction, and we are not grieved for it, nor lay it to heart.

II. Here is the doom passed upon them; (v. 7.) Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and shall fall into all the miseries that attend captives; and the banquet of them that stretched themselves upon their couches, shall be removed. Their plenty shall be taken from them, and they shall make it the food and fuel of their lusts. 1. Those who lived in luxury, shall lose even their liberty; and by being brought into servitude, shall be justly punished for the abuse of their dignity and dominion. 2. Those who trusted in the delights and pleasures of their own land, shall be carried away into a strange land, and so made ashamed of their pride and confidence; they shall be carried captive in affliction, and terrified in the pleasures of sense, and set their hearts upon them, shall be deprived of those pleasures; their banquet shall be removed, and they shall know what it is to fare hard. 4. Those who stretched themselves, shall be made to contract themselves, and to come into a less compass. 5. Those who put the evil day far from them, shall find it nearer to them.
than it is to others; they shall go captive with the first, who flattered themselves with hopes that if trouble did come, they would be the last who should be seized by it. These are ripening apace for trouble themselves, who lay not to heart the troubles of others, and of the church of God. Those who give themselves to mirth, when God calls them to mourning, will find it is a sin that shall not go unpunished, Isa. xxxii. 14.

3. The Lord God hath sworn by himself, saith the Lord, the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city, with all that is therein. And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die. 10. And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue; for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord. 11. For, behold, the Lord commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts. 12. Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plough there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock. 13. Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength? 14. But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the Lord, the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of the wilderness.

In the former part of the chapter, we had these secure Israelites loading themselves with pleasures, as if they could never be made merry enough; here we have God loading them with punishments, as if they never could be made miserable enough. And observe,

1. How strongly this burden is bound on, not to be shaken off by their presumption and security; for it is bound by the Lord, the God of hosts, by his mighty, his almighty hand, which none can resist; it is bound with an oath, which puts the sentence past revocation; The Lord God has sworn, and he will not repent, and since he could swear by no greater, he has sworn by himself; How dreadful, how incapable, is the case of those whose ruin, whose eternal ruin, God himself has sworn, who can execute his purpose, and cannot alter it!

II. How heavy this burden lies! Let us see the particulars.

1. God will abhor and abandon them; and that speaks misery enough, all misery; I abhor the excellency of Jacob; all that which they are proud of, and value themselves upon, and for which they exalt and count themselves the chief of the nations. Their visible church-membership, and the privileges of that, their temple, altar, and priesthood, these were, more than any thing, the excellencies of Jacob; but when these were profaned and polluted by sin, God abhorred them, he hated and despised them, ch. v. 21. Note, God abhors that form of godliness which hypocrites keep up, while they abhor the power of it. And if he abhors their temple, for the iniquity of that, no marvel that he hates their palaces, for the injustice and oppression he finds there. Note, That creature which we take such complacency, and put such a confidence in, as to make it a rival with God, is thereby made abominable to him. He hates the palates of sinners, for the sake of the wickedness of them which dwell therein, Prov. iii. 33. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked. And if God abhor them, immediately it follows, He will deliver up the city with all that is therein, deliver it up into the hands of the enemy, that will lay it waste, and make a prey of all its wealth. Note, Those that are abhorred and abandoned of God, are undone in their possessions and estate.

2. There shall be a great and general mortality among them; (v. 9.) If there remain ten men in one house, that have escaped the sword of the enemy, yet they shall be met with another way; they shall all die by famine or pestilence. In the most sickly times, if there be ten in a house, one may hope that at least the one half of them will escape, according to the proportion of two in a bed, one taken and the other left; but here not one of ten shall live to bury the rest. Another instance of the greatness of the mortality, is, (v. 10.) that the nearest relations of the dead shall be forced with their own hands to wind up their bodies, and bury them, for want of other hands to be employed in it; that is all that the least of kin, to whom the right of redemption belongs, can do for them, and with such reluctance will they do that. It intimates that the young people shall be cut off soonest; for the uncle that survives, is, ordinarily, the senior relation. When the uncle comes with the sexton, (for him that burns,) to bring out the bones out of the house, he shall say to him that he sees next about the house, "Is there any left alive?" and he shall say, "No, this is the last; now the whole family is cut off by death, and neither root nor branch remains." But that which makes this judgment the more grievous, is, that their hearts seem to be hardened under it. When he that was found by the sides of the house, began to enter into discourse with those that were carrying the bones, and say, "Let us be deft at Hold thy tongue; they do not stand preaching to us about the hand of Providence in this calamity, for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord; God is so angry with us, that there is no speaking to him, he is so extreme to mark what we do amiss, that we dare not so much as make mention of his name." Thus the foolishness of men perverts their way, and brings them into distress, and then their hearts frets against the Lord. Even then they will not take notice of his hand, nor suffer those about them to do it.

Perhaps it was forbidden by some of the idolatrous kings to make mention of the name of Jehovah, as by the law of Moses it was forbidden to make mention of the names of the heathen gods; We may not do it without incurring the penalty. Note, The law that was given to Moses by God, indeed, that will not be brought to make mention of God's name, and to worship him, when the hand of God is gone out against them, and when, as here, sickness and death are in their families. Thus those heap up wrath, who cry not when God binds them.

3. Their houses shall be destroyed, v. 11. God will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts; they shall both be cracked, as to lose their beauty and strength, and to be hastening towards a fall. The princes' palaces are not above the rebukes of divine justice, nor the poor men's cottages beneath it; neither shall escape when sin has marked them for ruin, God will find ways to bring it about. It is by order from him that breachers are made.
III. How justly they are thus burthened; if we understand the matter aright, we shall say, The Lord is righteous.

1. The method used for their reformation had been all fruitless and ineffectual; (v. 12.) Shall howls upon the rock, to hurl or harrow the ground there? Or will one plough there with oxen? No, for there will be no profit to countervail the pains. God had sent them his prophets, to break up their fellow-ground; but they found them as hard and inflexible as the rock, rough and rugged, and they could do no good with them, nor work upon them, and therefore they shall not attempt it any more. They will not be reclaimed, and therefore shall not be reproved, but quite abandoned. Note, Those who will not be husbands as field and vineyards, shall be rejected as barren rocks and deserts, Heb. vi. 7, 8.

2. They had abused their power to the wrong and oppression of many, whose injured cause the sovereign Judge would not only right, but revenge; Ye have turned judgment into gall, which is nauseous, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock, which is noxious; it would make one sick to see how those who were intrusted with the administration of public justice, bear down equity with that power with which they ought to have defended and supported it, and so turned its own artillery against itself. Note, When our services of God are soured with sin, his providences will justly be imbittered to us.

3. They had set the judgments of God at defiance, and confiding in their own strength, thought themselves a match for Omnipotence, v. 13. They rejoiced in a thing of naught, pleased themselves with a fancy that no evil should befall them, though they had no ground at all for that confidence, nothing to trust to that would bear any weight. They said, Have we not taken upon us horns, are we not arrived to great dignity and dominion, have we not pushed down our enemies, and pushed on our victories, and thereby our own strength rejoice in a thing of naught, and so they will find. Probably they did not say this with their lips, sedem verbis, but it was the language of their hearts, and of their actions, both which God understands.

IV. How easily and effectually this burthen shall be brought upon them, v. 14. He that brings it upon them is the Lord, the God of hosts, who both may do, and can do, what he pleaseth; who has all creatures at his command, and who, when he has work to do, will not want instruments to do it with; though they are the house of Israel, yet he will raise up against them a nation which they feared not, and many a time hop in, even the Assyrians, and this nation shall afflict them, bring them into straits, and put them to pain, from the entering in of Hamath, in the north, to the river of the wilderness, the river of Egypt, Sihor, or Nile, in the south. The whole nation hath shared in the iniquity, and therefore must expect to share in the curse.

1. This is said not in vain, nor for any threats or affictions to us, we must see God raising them up against us, for they are his hand, the rod, the sword in his hand. The Lord hath hidden Shimei curse David.

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, we have, 1. God contending with Israel, by the judgments brought on their land. 2. They are threatened with lesser judgments, but are reprov ed, and the judgments turned away at the prayer of Amos, v. 1. 8. 2. God's patience is at length worn out by their obstinacy, and they are rejected, and so to lead to utter ruin, v. 7. 9. II. Israel contending with God, by the opposition given to his prophet. 1. Amaziah informs against Amos, (v. 10, 11.) and does what he can to rid the country of him as a public nuisance, (v. 12, 13.) 2. Amos justifies himself in what he did as a prophet, (v. 14, 15.) and denounces the judgments of God against Amaziah his prosecutor, (v. 16, 17.) for when the contest is between God and Amaziah, it is very easy to forecast, who will come off with the worst of it.

1. THUS hath the Lord God shewed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings. 2. And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee; by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. 3. The Lord repented for this: it shall not be, saith the Lord. 4. Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me; and, behold, the Lord God called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part. 5. Then said I, O Lord God, cease, I beseech thee; by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. 6. The Lord repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord God. 7. Thus he shewed me; and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumb-line, with a plumb-line in his hand. 8. And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumb-line. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more: 9. And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

We here see that God bears long, but that he will not bear always, with a provoking people; both these God here showed the prophet: Thus hath the Lord God showed me, v. 1, 4, 7. He showed him what was present, foreshowed him what was to come; gave him the knowledge both of what he did, and of what he designed; for the Lord God reveals his secret to his servants the prophets, ch. iii. 7. 1. We have here two instances of God's sparing mercy, remembered in the midst of judgment, the narratives of which are so like one another, that they will be best considered together, and very considera
tible they are.

1. God is here coming forth against this sinful nation, first by one judgment, and then by another.

(1.) He begins with the judgment of famine; the prophet saw this in vision. He saw God raising grasshoppers, or locusts, and bringing them up upon the land, to eat up the fruits of it, and so to strip it of its beauty, and starve its inhabitants, v. 1. God formed these grasshoppers, not only as they were his creatures, (and much of the wisdom and power of God appears in the formation of minute animals,) as much in the structure of an ant as of an elephant,
as the water designed for the stop-

ping and quenching of this fire was as the water of great desh; the great dew of God can stand before a fire kindled by the wrath of God? It did eat up a part, a great part, of the cities where it was sent; or, it was as the fire at Taborah, which consumed the uttermost parts of the camp; (Num. xi. 1.) when some were overwhelmed, others were as brands plucked out of the fire. All deserved to be devoured, but it ate up only a part, for God does not strike with a vengeance, he does not act, as the heathens do, as a somebody, but as a holy God, a God holy in his ways; and he only aims at reviving their soul, though, as he has done in the case of some in the gospel church, he at last devours him. 2. The prophet goes forth to meet him in the way of his judgments, and by prayer seeks to turn away his wrath, v. 2. When he saw, in vision, what dreadful work these caterpillars made, that they had eaten up in a manner all the grass of the land, (he foresaw they would do so, if suffered to go on,) then he said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee; (v. 2.) cease, I beseech thee, v. 3. He forsook the judgment in his preaching to the people, yet deprecated it in his intercessions for them. He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee. It was the busi
ess of prophets to pray for those whom they prophesied to, and so to make it appear that though they denounced, they did not desire, the woful day. He was not the prophet, nor the great worker of wonders, that they might befriend the people, not only by warning them, but by praying for them, and standing in the gap, to turn away God's wrath, as Moses, that great prophet, often did. Now observe here,

(1.) The prophet's prayer; O Lord God, [1.] Forgive, I beseech thee, and take away thy sin. (He sees at the bottom of the trouble, and therefore concludes that the pardon of sin must be at the bottom of the deliverance, and prays for that in the first place. Note, Whatever calamity we are under, personal or public, the forgiveness of sin is that which we should be most earnest with God for. [2.] Cease, I beseech thee, and take away the judgment; cease the fire, cease the controversy; cause thine anger towards us to cease. This follows upon the forgiveness of sin. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease. Note, These whom God contends with, will soon find what need they have to cry for a cessation of arms; and there are hopes that though God has begun, and proceeded far, in his controversy, yet it may be obtained.)

(2.) The prophet's prayer in this prayer; By whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small? (v. 2.) And it is repeated, (v. 5.) and yet no vain repetition. Christ, in his agony, prayed earnestly, saying the same words again and again. [1.] It is Ja
cob that he is interceding for, the professing people of God, called by his name, calling on his name, the seed of Jacob, his chosen, and in covenant with him. It is Jacob's case that is in this prayer spread before the God of Jacob. [2.] Jacob is small, very small already, weakened and brought low by former judgments; and therefore if these come, he will be quite ruined, and brought to nothing. The people are few, the dust of Jacob is now soon count
ed, which once was innumerable. Those few are feeble; it is the worm Jacob, (Isa. xl. 14.) they are feeble, or one another. Sin will soon make a great people small; will diminish the numerous, impoverish the plenteous, and weaken the courageous. [3.] By whom shall he arise? He is fallen, and cannot help himself up, and he has no friend to help him, none to raise him, unless the hand of God do it; what will become of him then, if the hand that should raise him be stretched out against him? Note, When the state of God's church is very low and very helpless, it is proper to be recommended by our prayers to God's pity.

3. God graciously lets fall his controversy, in an
twerto the prophet's prayer, once and again; (v. 3.)
The Lord repented for this; he did not change his mind, for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? But he changed his way, took another course, and determined to deal in mercy, and not in wrath. He said, I shall not be. And again, (v. 6.) This also shall not be. The catarpillars were countermanded, were remanded, a stop put to the progress of the fire, and thus a reprieve was granted. See the power of prayer, of effectual, fervent prayer, and the God who is merciful, and who delays his anger, waits for! A stop has many a time been put to a judgment by making supplication to the Judge. This was not the first time that Israel’s life was begged, and so saved. See what a blessing praying people, praying prophets, are to a land, and therefore how highly they ought to be valued. Ruin had many a time broken in, if they had not stood in the breach, and made good the passage. See how ready, how swift, God is to show mercy, how he waits to be gracious. Amos moves for a reprieve, and obtains it, because God inclines to grant it, and looks about to see if there be any that will intercede for it, Isa. lix. 16.

Nor are former reprieves objected against further instances of mercy, but are rather encouragement to pray and hope for them. This also shall not be; any more than in the former. It is not my will, saith he, that he multiplies to pardon, that he spares, and forgives, to more than seventy times seven times.

II. We have here the rejection of those at last, who had been often reproved, and yet never reclaimed, reduced to straits, and yet never reduced to their God and their duty. This is represented to the prophet by a vision, (v. 7, 8.) and an expression of utter ruin, v. 9, 10.

1. The vision is of a plumb-line, a line with a plummet at the end of it, such as masons and bricklayers use, to run up a wall by, that they may work it straight and true, and by rule. (1.) Israel was a wall, a strong wall, which God himself had reared, as a bulwark, or wall of defence, to his sanctuary, which he set up among them. The Jewish church says of herself, (Cant. viii. 10.) I am a wall, and my breasts like towers. This wall was made by a plumb-line, very exact and firm. So happy was its constitution, so well compacted, and every thing so well ordered according to the model; it had long stood fast as a wall of brass; but (2.) God now stands upon this wall, not to hold it up, but to tread it down; or rather, to consider what he should do with it; he stands upon it with a plumb-line to measure it, and to take measure of it, that it may appear to be a bowing, bulging wall, Recti est index et obliqui—This plumb-line would discover where it was crooked. Thus God would bring the people of Israel to the trial, would discover their wickedness, and show wherein they erred; and he would likewise bring his judgments upon them according to equity; would set a plumb-line in the midst of them, to mark how far their wall must be pulled down; as David measured the Moabites with a line, (2 Sam. viii. 2.) to put them to death. And when God is coming to the ruin of a people, he is said to lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; for when he punishes, it is with exactness. It is now determined, I will not again pass by them any more; they shall not be spared without mercy; their judgment shall not be turned away, ch. 3. 2. Nor God’s patience, which has long been sinned against, will at length be sinned away; and the time will come when those that have been spared often, shall be no longer spared. My spirit shall not always strive. After frequent reproves, yet a day of execution will come.

2. The prediction is of utter ruin, v. 9, 10. (1.) The body of the people shall be destroyed, with all those things that were their ornament and defence. They are here called Isaac as well as Israel; the house of Isaac; (v. 16.) some think, in allusion to the designation of Isaac’s name; it is laughter; they shall become a jest among their neighbours; they shall laugh at them. The desolation shall fasten upon their high places, and their sanctuaries; either their castles, or their temples, both built on high places; their castles they thought safe, and their temples sacred as sanctuaries; these shall be fully wasted, that they may more effectually make them ashamed of their carnal confidences, which were the two things for which God had a controversy with them. When these were made desolate, they might read their sin and folly in their punishment. (2.) The royal family shall sink first, as an earnest of the ruin of the whole kingdom; I will rise against the house of Jeroboam, Jeroboam the second, who was anointed to be king, and for whose house the branch family was extirpated in his son Zecarias, who was slain with the sword before the people, by Shallum, who conspired against him, 2 Kings xv. 10. How unrighteous soever the instruments were, God was righteous, and in them God rose up against that idolatrous family. Every king’s houses will be no shelter against the sword of God’s wrath.

10. Then Amaziah, the priest of Beth-el, sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. 11. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land. 12. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: 13. But prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king’s chapel, and it is the king’s court. 14. Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was a herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore-fruit:

15. And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. 16. Now, therefore, hear thou the word of the Lord: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac. 17. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Thy wife shall be a harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land; and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.

One would have expected that what we met with in the former part of the chapter, should, 1. Have awakened the people to repentance, when they saw their own ruin threatened; they might have space to repent, and that they could not obtain a pardon unless they did repent. 2. That it should have endeared the prophet Amos to them, who had not only showed his good will to them, in praying against the judgments that invaded them, but had prevailed to turn away those judgments; which, if they had had any sense of gratitude, would have gained him an interest in their affections; but it fell out quite contrary; they continue impenitent, and
the next we hear of Amos, is, that he is perse-
scuted. Note, As it is the praise of great saints,
that they pray for those that are enemies to
them, so it is the shame of many great sinners,
that they are enemies to those who pray for them, Ps. xxxv.
9, 13, 15. ex. 4. We have here,
1. The malicious information brought to the king against the prophet Amos, v. 10, 11. The informer was Amaziah the priest of Bethel, the chief of the priests that ministered at the shrine called there, the high
president of Bethel, (so some read it,) that had the principal hand in civil affairs there. He complained against Amos, not only because he prophesied without license from him, but because he prophesied against his altars, which would soon be deserted and demolished. If Amos’s preaching could but have been for his altars, and against his king, he would have been saved. Amaziah, who had persuaded Paul, because his preaching tended to spoil their trade. Note, Great pretenders to sanctity are commonly the worst enemies to those who are really sanctified. Priests have been the most bitter persecutors. Amaziah brings an information to Jeroboam against Amos. Observe,
1. The crime he is charged with, is no less than treason against his altars and his king. To expose and murder thee, he aims at succeeding thee, and therefore is taking the most effectual way to weaken thee. He sows the seeds of sedition in the hearts of the good subjects of the king, and makes them disaffected to him and his government, that he may draw them by degrees from their allegiance; upon this account the land is not able to be possessed of its charge, that he complained to the king, that the country was exasperated against him, and it is given in as their sense, that his preaching was intolerable, and such as nobody could be reconciled to, such as the times would by no means bear, that is, the men of the times would not. Both the impiety of his supposed treason, and the ill influence it would have upon the country, are intimated in that part of the charge, that he complained to the king, that the land was disaffected against him, and it is given in as their sense, that his preaching was intolerable, and such that nobody could be reconciled to, such as the times would by no means bear. That is, the men of the times would not. And yet here, I doubt it was too true, that the people could not bear plain dealing with any more than the priests.
2. The words laid in the information, for the support of this charge; (v. 11.) Amos says, and they have witnesses ready to prove it, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall be led away captive; and hence they infer that he is an enemy to his king and country, and not to be tolerated. See the miracle of Amaziah; he does not tell the king how Amos had interceded for Israel, and by his intercession had turned away, first one judgment and then another, and did not let fall his intercession till he saw the decree was gone forth; he does not tell him that these threatenings were conditional, and that he had often assured them, that if they repent and reform, the ruin should be prevented. Nay, it was not true that he said, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, nor did he so die, (2 Kings xiv. 28.) but that God would rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword, v. 9. God’s prophets and ministers have often had occasion to make David’s words good, Ps. lxi. 5.) Every day they worst
my words. But shall it be made the watchman’s crime, when he sees the sword coming, to give warning to the people, that they may get themselves secured? Or the physician’s crime, to tell his patient of the danger of his disease, that he may use means for the cure of it? What enemies are foolish men to themselves, to their own peace, to their best friends! It does not appear that Jeroboam took any notice of this information; perhaps he revered him a prophet, and stood more in awe of the divine authority than Amaziah his priest did.
II. The method he used to persuade Amos to withdraw, and quit the country; (v. 12, 13.) when he could not gain his point with the king to have Amos imprisoned, banished, or put to death, or at least to have him frightened into silence or flight, he tried what he could do by fair means to get rid of him; insinuated himself into his acquaintance, and with all the arts of wheedling endeavoured to persuade him to go prophesy in the land of Judah, and not at Bethel. He owns him to be a seer, and does not pretend to enjoin him silence, but suggests to the king, 1. That he would make it a matter of honour with him to exercise his ministry in, for it was the king’s chapel, or sanctuary, where he had his idols, and their altars and priests; and it was the king’s court, or the house of the kingdom, where the royal family resided, and where were set the thrones of judgment; and therefore prophesy not any more here. And why not? (1.) Because Amos is too plain and direct a prophet to suit the weakness of their king’s court. They that wear silk and fine clothing, and speak silken soft words, are fit for kings’ palaces. (2.) Because the worship that is in the king’s chapel will be a continual vexation and trouble to Amos, let him therefore get far enough from it, and what the eye sees not, the heart grieves not for. (3.) Because it was not fit that the king and his house should be affected in their own court and chapel by the reproofs and threatenings which Amos was continually teaching them with in the name of the Lord; as if it were the prerogative of the prince, and the privilege of the priests, when they are running headlong upon a sacrifice, not to be told of their danger. (4.) Because he could not expect any encouragement or encouragement there, but, on the contrary, to be bantered and ridiculed by some, and to be threatened and brow-beaten by others; however, he could not think to make any converts there, or to persuade any from that idolatry which was supported by the authority and example of the king. To preach his doctrine there, was but (as we say) to run his head against a post; and therefore prophesy not any more here. But then there was another consideration, that the land of Judah was the fittest place for him to set up in; Flee thee away thither with all speed, and there eat bread, and prophesy there; there thou wilt be safe, there thou wilt be welcome, the king’s court and chapel there are on thy side; the prophets there will second thee, the priests and princes will take notice of thee, and allow thee an honourable maintenance. See here, (1.) How willing were men are to get clear of their faithful reprovers, and how ready to say to the seers, See not, or see not for us; the two witnesses were a torment to them that dwelt on the earth, (Rev. xi. 10.) and it were indeed a pity that men should be tormented before the time, but that it is in order to the preventing of eternal torment. (2.) How apt worldly men are to make sure of ease others by themselves. Amaziah, as urged against him at nothing but the profits of his place, and he thought Amos, as a prophet, had the same views, and therefore advised him to prophesy there, where he might eat bread, where he might be sure to have as much as he chose; whereas Amos was to prophesy where God appointed him, and where there was need of him, not where a man would get most money. Note, Those that make use of their godliness, and are governed by the hopes of wealth and preferment themselves, are ready to think these the most powerful inducements with others also.
III. The reply which Amos made to these sug
gestions of Amaziah’s; he did not consult with flesh and blood, nor was it his care to enrich himself, but to make full proof of his ministry, and to be found faithful in the discharge of it, not to sleep in a white skin, but to keep a white countenance, and therefore he resolves to abide by his post, and, in answer to Amaziah,

1. He justifies himself in his constant adherence to his work, and to his place; (v. 14, 15.) and that which he is sure will not only bear him out, but bind him to it, is, that he had a divine warrant and commission for it; I was no prophet, or prophet’s son; and any man standing for his own interest, or any one designing for a prophet, as Samuel and Jeremiah, not educated in the schools of the prophets, as many others were; but I was a herdsman, a keeper of cattle, and a gatherer of sycamore-fruit. Our sycamores bear no fruit, but, it seems, theirs did, which Amos gathered, either for his cattle, or for himself and his family, or to sell; he was a plain countryman, bred up and employed in country work, and used to country fare. He followed the flocks as well as the herds, and thence God took him, and bid him go prophesy to his people Israel, deliver to them such messages as he should from time to time receive from the Lord. God made him a prophet, and a prophet to them; appointed him his work, and appointed him his post. Therefore he ought not to be silenced for, (1.) He could produce a divine command from God, ought not to fear the face of man. He was sent, but pleading, as Paul, that he was called to be an apostle; and men will find it is at their peril if they contradict and oppose any that come in God’s name; if they say to his seers, See not, or silence those whom he has bid speak, such fight against God. An affront done to an ambassador is an affront to the prince that sends him. Those that have a warrant from God, ought not to fear the face of man. He was sent, but pleading, as Paul, that he was called to be an apostle; and men will find it is at their peril if they contradict and oppose any that come in God’s name; if they say to his seers, See not, or silence those whom he has bid speak, such fight against God.

(2.) The man character he bore before he received that commission, strengthened his warrant, so far was it from weakening it. [1.] He had no thoughts at all of ever being a prophet, and therefore his prophesying could not be imputed to a raised expectation, or a heated imagination, but purely to a divine impulse. [2.] He was not educated or instructed in the art or mystery of prophesying, and therefore no part of the evidence of his commission. When the treasure is put into such earthen vessels, it is thereby made to appear that the excellency of the former is of God, and not of man, 2 Cor. iv. 7. [3.] He had an honest calling, by which he could comfortably maintain himself and his family, and therefore did not need to prophesy for bread, as Amaziah suggested, (v. 12.) did not take it up as a trade to live by, but as a trust to honour God and do good with. [4.] He had all his days been accustomed to a plain, homely way of living, among poor husbandmen, and never affected any greater delicacies or dainties, and therefore would not have thrust himself so near the king’s court and chapel, if the business God had called him to, had not called him thither. [5.] Having been so meekly bred, he could not have had courage to speak to kings and great men, especially to speak such bold and provoking things to them, as he had not been animated by a greater spirit than his own. If God had not restrained the torrent of his spirit, he could not thus have set his face as a flint, Isa. l. 7. Note, God often chooses the weak and foolish things of this world to confound the wise and mighty; and a Hermon of Tekoa puts to shame a prince of Bethel, when he receives from God authority and ability to act for him.

2. He condemns Amaziah for the opposition he gave him, and denounces the judgments of God against him; not from any private resentment or revenge, but in the name of the Lord, and by authority from him. (v. 16, 17.) And God would not suffer Amos to preach at all, and therefore he is particularly ordered to preach against him; now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord, hear it and tremble. These that cannot bear general woes, may expect woes of their own. The sin he is charged with is, forbidding Amos to prophesy; we do not find that he beat him or put him in the stocks, only he enjoined him silence, Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Israel, he must not only not thunder against them, but he must not so much as drop a word against them; he cannot bear, no, not the most gentle distilling of that rain, that small rain. Let him therefore hear his doom. (1.) For the opposition he gave to Amos, God will bring ruin upon himself and his family. This was the sin that filled the measure of his iniquity. [1.] He shall have no comfort in any of his relations, but be afflicted in those that were nearest to him. His wife shall be a harlot; either she shall be forcibly abused by the soldiers, as the Levite’s concubine by the men of Gibeah, (they ravish the women in Zion, Lam. v. 11.) or she shall herself wickedly play the harlot, which, though her sin, her great sin, would be his affliction, his great affliction in representing her infatuation, and procuring the soldiers to profane themselves in promoting spiritual whoredom. Sometimes the sins of our relations are to be looked upon as the judgments of God upon us. His children, though they keep honest, yet shall not keep alive; his sons and his daughters shall fall by the sword of war, and he himself shall live to see it. He had trained them up in iniquity, and therefore God will cut them off in it. [2.] He shall fall into the hands of the enemy, and be divided by line, by lot among the soldiers. What is ill got will not be long kept. [3.] He shall himself perish in a strange country, not in the land of Israel, which had been holyness to the Lord, but in a polluted land, in a heathen country, the fittest place for such a heathen to end his days in, that hated and silenced his prophets, and profaned them by setting them to the polluting of his own land with idolatry. (2.) Notwithstanding the opposition he gave to Amos, God will bring ruin upon the land and nation; he was accused for saying, Israel shall be led away captive, (v. 11.) but he stands to it, and repeats it; for the unbelief of man shall not make the word of God of no effect; the utterance of the word of the Lord may be clivered with, but it cannot be shaken. God let Amaziah rage, and fret, and say what he will to the contrary, Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land. Note, It is to no purpose to contend with the judgments of God; for when God judges he will overcome. Stopping the mouth of God’s ministers will not stop the progress of God’s word, for it shall not return void.

CHAP. VIII.

Sinful times are here attended with sorrowful times, so much as the connexion between them; it is threatened here again and again that the slaughter shall be turned into mourning. By the same也非常 likely to be the fruit of the rain threatened, (v. 13.) and that shall change their note. II. Oppressors are here called to an account for their abusing of the poor, and hereby they will be brought under to mourning, v. 4-10. III. A famine of the word of God is here made the punishment of a people that go a whoring after other gods (v. 14.) yet for this, which is the most fearful judgment of all, they are not here brought in mourning.

1. Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me, and held, a basket of
summer-fruit. 2. And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer-fruit. Then said the Lord unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more. 3. And the songs of the temples shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord God: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.

The great reason why sinners defer their repentance, de de in diem— from day to day, is, because they think God thus dismisses his judgments, and there is no song wherewith they so efectually sing themselves to cast away the Lord's day, and therefore God, by his prophets, frequently represents to Israel the day of his wrath not only as just and certain, but as very near and hastening on apace; so he does in these verses.

1. The approach of the threatened ruin is represented by a basket of summer-fruit which Amos saw in a vision; for the Lord showed it him, (v. 1) and repeated it to his hearers, (v. 2) noted in his notes; what seest thou? Note, It concerns us to inquire whether we do indeed see that which God has been pleased to show us, and hear what he has been pleased to say to us; for many a thing God speaks, God shows once, yea, twice, and men heretofore not. Are we in the midst of the visions of the Almighty? Let us be sure our base, summer-fruit gathered and ready to be eaten: which signified, (1.) That they were ripe for destruction, rotten ripe, and it was time for God to put in the sickle of his judgments, and to cut them off; nay, the thing was in effect done already, and they ly but ready to be eaten up. (2.) That the year of God's patience was drawing towards a conclusion with them, and that year would quickly have its period in a dismal winter. (3.) These we call summer-fruits, that will not keep till winter, but must be used immediately; an emblem of this people, that had nothing solid or consistent in them.

2. The intent and meaning of this vision is no more than this. It signifies that the end is come upon the house of Israel. The word that the end is, is kizz, which is of near affinity with kitz, the word used for summer-fruit. God had long spared them, and borne with them, but now his patience is tired out: they are indeed his people Israel, but their end, that latter end they had been so often reminded of, but had so long forgotten, is now come. Note, If sinners do not make an end of sin, God will make an end of them, yea, though they be his fruitful Israel. What was said, ch. vi. 8, is here repeated as God's determined resolution; I will not again pass by them any more, they shall not be conformed to as they have been, nor the judgment coming turned away.

3. The consequence of this shall be a universal desolation; (v. 3) When the end is come, sorrow and death shall ride in triumph, they are accustomed to go together, and shall at length go away together, when in heaven there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, Rev. xxi. 4. But here in a sinful world, in a sinful nation, (1.) Sorrow reigns; reigns to that degree, that the songs of the temple shall be howlings; the songs of God's temple at Jerusalem, or, rather, of their idol-temples, where they used, when, in honour of the golden calves, they had eaten and drunk, to rise up and play. They were perhaps wanton, profane songs; and it is certain that sooner or later those will be turned into howlings. Or if they had a sound or show of pietie and religion, yet, not coming from the heart nor being sung to the glory of God, he valued them not, but would justly turn them into howlings. Note, Mourning will follow sinful mirth, yea, and sacred mirth too, if it be not sincere. And when God's judgments are abroad, they will soon turn the greatest joy into the greatest heaviness; the temple-songs, which used to sound so pleasant, not only into sighs and groans, but into loud howlings which sound dismal. They shall come to the temple, and, finding it in ruins, they shall howl most bitterly.

(2.) Death reigns; reigns to that degree, that there shall be dead bodies, many dead bodies in every place, (Ps. ex. 6.) skin by sword or pestilence; so many, that the survivors shall not bury them with the usual pomp and solemnity of funerals, they shall not so much as have the bell tolled, but they shall cast them forth with silence; shall bury them in the dead of the night, and charge all about them to be silent, and to take no notice of it; either because they have not wherewithal to bear the charges of a funeral, or because, the killing disease being infectious, none will come near them; or for fear the enemy should be provoked, if they should be known to lament their slain. Or, they shall charge themselves and one another silently to submit to the hand of God in his distress, and connive at the death of the pine and quarrel with him. Or, it may be taken not for a patient but a sullen silence; their hearts shall be hardened, and all these judgments shall not extort from them one word of acknowledgment, either of God's righteousness or their own unrighteousness.

4. Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, 5. Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? 6. That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat? 7. The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. 8. Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt. 9. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day: 10. And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof a bitter day.

God is here contending with proud oppressors, and showing them, I. The heinousness of the sin they were guilty of; in short, they had the character of the unjust judge, (Luke xviii. 2.) that neither feared God nor regarded man.

1. "Observe them in their operations, and you will say, 'They have no reverence for God.'" Bad as they are they do indeed keep up a show and form of godliness, they observe the sabbath and the new moon, they put some difference between those days and other days; but they were soon weary of them, and had no affection at all to them, for their hearts
were wholly set upon the world and the things of it. It is a sad character which this gives of them, that they said, "When will the sabbath be gone, that we may sell corn?" Yet it is still the character of many that are called Christians. (1.) They were weary of sabbath-days; When will they be gone? They were weary of the restraints of the sabbaths and the new moons, and therefore wished them over, because they might do no servile work then. (2.) They were weary of the sabbaths and new moons, snuffed at it, (Mal. i. 13.) and were as Doeg, detained before the Lord; (1 Sam. xxi. 7.) they would rather have been any where else than about God's altars. Note, Sabbath-days and sabbath-work are a barthen to carnal hearts, that are always afraid of doing too much for God and eternity. Can we spend our time better than in communion with God? And how much time do we spend pleasantly with the world? Will not the sabbath be gone before we have done the work of it, and reaped the gains of it? Why then should we be in such haste to part with it? (2.) They were fond of market-days; they longed to be selling corn, and setting forth wheats. When they were employed in religious services, they were thinking of their marketings, their hearts were after the wares of the market. (Com. Luke, 16.) and they made my Father's house a house of merchandise, nay, a den of thieves. Therefore they were weary of holy duties, because their worldly business stood still the while; in which they were as in their element, but in God's sanctuary as a fish upon dry ground. Note, Those are strangers to God, and enemies to themselves, that love market-days better than sabbath-days, that would rather be selling corn than worshiping God.

2. Observe them in their conversations, and you will see they have no regard to man; and this commonly follows upon the former; those that have lost the favour of piety, will not long retain the sense of common honesty. These here neither do justly, nor love mercy.

(1.) They cheat those they deal with. When they sell their corn, they impose upon the buyer, both in giving out the goods, and in receiving the money for them. They measure him the corn by their own measure, and pretend to give him what he agreed for, but they make the ephah small. The measure is scanty, and not statute measure, and so they wrong him that way; when they receive his money, they must weigh it in their own scales, by their own weights, and their shekel they weigh him by; he is paid for more than he receives, so that the money, being found too light, must have more added to it; and so they cheat that way too, and this under colour and pretence of exactness in doing justice. By such wicked practices as these, men show such a greediness of the world, such a love of themselves, such a contempt of mankind in general, of the particular persons they deal with, and of the sacred laws of justice, as speak indeed a great deal concerning the character of that love of that God who has so plainly said that false weights and balances are an abomination to him. Another instance of their fraudulent dealing is, that they sell the refuse of the wheat, and, taking the advantage of their neighbours' ignorance or necessity, make them take it at the same price at which they sell the choice of the wheats.

(2.) They areurious and uncerefile to the poor; they swallow up the needy, and make the poor of the land to fail. [1.] They valued themselves so much on their wealth, that they looked upon all that were poor with the highest contempt imaginable; they hated them, could not endure them, but abandoned them; and therefore did what they could to make them cease; not by relieving them to make them cease to be poor, but by ban-

ishing and destroying them, to make them cease to be, or, at least, to be in their land. But he who thus reproaches the poor, despises his Maker, in whose hands rich and poor meet together. [2.] They were so eager to increase their wealth, and make it more, that they robbed the poor to enrich themselves; and therefore they fastened upon the poor, to make a prey of them, because they were not able to right themselves, nor to resist or revenge the violence of their oppressors. They riches that are got by the ruin of the poor, will bring ruin on those that get them. They swallowed up the poor by making them hard bargains, and cheating them in those bargains; for therefore they falsify the balances by deceit, not only that they may enrich themselves, may have money at command, and so may have every thing else (as they think) at command too, but that they may overreach those about them, and bring them so low, that they may force them to become slaves to them, and so having drained them of every thing else, they may have their labour for nothing, or next to nothing: thus they buy the poor for silver, they bring them and their children into bondage, because they have not wherewithal to pay for the corn they have bought; And this was the case of the people that were reduced to this extremity, that the price was very low; and the oppressors had beaten it down so, that you might buy a poor man to be your slave for a pair of shoes. Property was first invaded, and then liberty: it is the method of oppressors first to make men beggars, and then to make them their vassals. Thus is the dignity of the human nature lost in the misery of these that are trampled on, and the tenderness of it in the sin of these that trample on them.

11. Observe the grievousness of the punishment that shall be inflicted on them for this sin. When the poor are injured, they will cry unto God, and he will hear their cry, and reckon with those that are injurious to them; for, they being his receivers, he takes the wrongs done to them as done to himself, Exod. xxi. 23, 24.

1. God will remember their sin against them: He has sworn by the excellency of Jacob, (v. 7.) by himself, for he can swear by no greater; and who but he is the Glory and Magnificence of Jacob? He has sworn by these tokens of his presence with them, and his favour to them, which they had profaned and abused, and had done what they could to make them destitute to him; for he is said (ch. vi. v. 8.) to abhorst the excellency of Jacob. He swears in his wrath, swears by his own name, that name which was so well known, and was so great in Israel: he swears, Surely I will never forget any of their works; but upon all occasions they shall be remembered against them, for more is implied than is expressed. I will never forget them, is as much as to say, I will never forgive them; and then it speaks of their extent and continuance of the same, not to be forgotten indeed, eternally miserable; wo, and a thousand woes, to that man that is cut off by an oath of God from all benefit by pardoning mercy; and those have reason to fear judgment without mercy, that have showed no mercy.

2. He will bring utter ruin and confusion upon them. It is here described largely, and in a great figure of speech, and a few expressions, that, if possible, they might be frightened into a sincere repentance and reformation.

(1.) There shall be a universal terror and confusion; Shall not the land tremble for this, (v. 8.) this land, out of which you thought to have driven the poor? Shall not every one mourn, that dwells therein? Certainly they shall. Note, Those that will not tremble and mourn as they ought for national sins, shall be made to tremble and mourn
12. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. 13. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst.

In these verses is threatened,

1. A general judgment of spiritual famine coming upon the whole land; a famine of the word of God, the failing of oracles, and the scarcity of good preaching. This is spoken of as a thing at some distance; The days come, they will come hereafter, when another kind of darkness shall come upon that land of light. When Amos prophesied, and for a considerable time after, there was great plenty of prophets, abundant opportunities of hearing the word of God, in season and out of season, they had precept upon precept, and line upon line; prophecy was their daily bread; and it is probable that they surfeited upon it, as Israel on the manna, and therefore God threatens that hereafter he will deprive them of prophecy, and that for a season, and even of the land of Israel there were not so many prophets, about the time that their destruction came upon them, as there were in the land of Judah; and when the ten tribes went into captivity, they saw not their signis, there were no more any prophets, none to show them how long, Ps. lxxiv. 9. The Jewish church, after Maccabaei, had no prophets for many ages; and that was the more to their comfort, the time of the blindness which is in part happened to Israel in the days of the Messiah, and the veil that is on the heart of the unbelieving Jews. They reject the gospel, and the ministers of it that God sends to them, and covet to have prophets of their own, as their fathers had, but they shall have none; the kingdom of God being taken from them, and given to another people. Observe how much farther, yet, to the blindness of that judgments is, that is threatened. It is a famine, a scarcity, not of bread and water, (which are the necessary supports of the body, and the want of which is very grievous,) but a much severer judgment than that, even a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. There shall be no congregations for ministers to preach to, nor any ministers to preach, nor any instructions and ordinances given to those that do set up for preachers, to enable them for their work. The word of the Lord shall be precious and scarce, there shall be no vision, 1 Sam. iii. 1. They shall have the written word, Bibles to read, but no ministers to explain and apply it to them; the water in the well, but nothing to draw. It is a gracious promise, (Isa. xxx. 20,) that they that have a scarcity of bread, they shall have plenty of the means of grace. God will give them the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, but their eyes shall see their teachers; and it was a common saying among the Puritans, that brown bread and the gospel is good fare; but it is here a threatening, that on the contrary they should have plenty enough of bread and water, and yet their teachers should be removed. Now, (1.) This was the departure of a great part of their glory from their land. This made their nation great and high, that to them were committed the oracles of God; but when those were taken from them, their beauty was stained, and their honour laid in the dust. (2.) This was a token of God’s highest displeasure against them; surely he was
angry indeed with them, when he would no more speak to them as he had done, and had abandoned them to ruin, when he would no more afford them the means of bringing them to repentance. (3.) This made all the other calamities that were upon them truly melancholy, that they had no prophets to instruct and comfort them from the word of God, nor to give them any hopeful prospect. We should say at any time, and will say in a time of trouble, that a famine of the word of God is of all others the worst, the heaviest judgment.

2. What shall be the effect of this? (v. 12.) They shall wander from sea to sea, from the sea of Tiberias to the great sea, from one border of the country to another, to see if God will send them prophets, either by sea or land, from other countries; since they have none among themselves, they shall go from the north to the east; when they are disappointed in one place, they shall try another, and shall go to and fro, as men at a loss, and in a hot pursuit to seek the word of the Lord, to inquire if there be any prophets, any prophecy, any message from God, but they shall not find it. (1.) Though to many this is no affliction at all, yet some will be very sensible of it as a great grievance, and will gladly travel far to hear a good sermon; but they shall sensibly feel the loss of those miracles which characterized the Lord’s power and grace. (2.) Even then, that slighted prophets when they had them, shall wish for them, as Saul did for Samuel, when they are deprived of them; many never know the worth of mercies till they feel the want of them. Or, it may be meant thus, Though they should thus wander from sea to sea, in quest of the word of God, yet they shall not find it.

Note, The means of grace are moveable things; and the candlestick, when we think it has found its way to its place, (Rev. ii. 5.) and those that now slight the days of the son of man, may wish in vain to see them. And in the day of this famine the fair virgins and the young men shall faint for thirst; (v. 13.) those who, one would think, could well enough have borne the toil, shall sink under it. The Jewish churches, and the masters of their synagogues, some take to be meant by the virgins and the sons of men; these shall lose the word of the Lord, and the benefit of divine revelation, and shall faint away for want of it, shall lose all their strength and beauty. Those that trust in their own merit and righteousness, and think they have no need of Christ, others take to be meant by the fair virgins and the choice young men; those shall faint for thirst, when those that hunger and thirst after the righteousness of Christ shall be abundantly satisfied and filled.

11. The particular destruction of those that were ringleaders in idolatry, v. 14. Observe, 1. The sin they are charged with. They swear by the sin of Samaria, by the god of Samaria, the idol that was worshipped at Bethel, not far off from Samaria; thus did they glory in their shame, and swear by that as their god, which was their iniquity, thinking that that could help them, which would certainly ruin them, and bring the highest judgments upon them, which they should have looked upon with the utmost abhorrence and detestation. They say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; that was the other golden calf, a dumb, dead idol, and yet caressed and complimented as if it had been the living and the true God. They say, The manner, or way, of Beer-sheba liveth; they swear by the religion of Beer-sheba, that it was a new and manner of worship used there, to which they looked upon as sacred, and therefore swear by, and appealed to as a judge of controversy. Thus the Papists swear by the mass, as the manner of Beer-sheba. 2. The destruction they are threatened with; those who thus give that honour to idols, which is due to God alone, will find that God

CHAP. IX.

In this chapter we have, 1. Judgments threatened, which the sinner shall not escape, (v. 1-4;) which an Almighty power shall inflict, (v. 5-6;) which the people of Israel have deserved as a sinful people; (v. 7-8;) and yet it shall not be the utter ruin of their nation, (v. 8;) for a remnant of good people shall escape, v. 9. But the wicked ones shall perish, v. 10. 11. Mercy promised, which was to be bestowed in the latter days, (v. 11-15;) as appears by the application of it to the days of the Messiah, Acts xvi. 18. And with those comfortable promises, after all the foregoing rebukes and threatenings, the book concludes.

1. I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the hireling of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away; and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered. 2. Though they dig into hell, thence shall my hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: 3. And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them: 4. And though they go into captivity before their enemies thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good. 5. And the Lord God of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn; and it shall rise up wholly like a flood, and shall be drowned, as by the flood of Egypt. 6. It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; The Lord is his name: 7. Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the Lord. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Assyrians from Kir? 8. Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord. 9. For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. 10. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword,
which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

We have here the justice of God passing sentence upon a provoking people; and observe,

1. With what solemnity the sentence is passed. The prophet saw in vision the Lord's seat among the cherubim, and heard and saw the false offerings by which the Lord has a sacrifice, and multitudes must fall as victims to his justice. He is removed from the mercy-seat between the cherubim, and stands upon the altar, the judgment-seat, on which the fire of God used to fall, to devour the sacrifices. He stands upon the altar, to show that the ground of his controversy with his people is this, that they have brought and set up no altar, and he is to avenge the slaughter of his altar; as also to signify that the sin of the house of Israel, like that of the house of Eli, shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever, 1 Sam. iii. 14. He stands on the altar, to prohibit sacrifice. Now the order given, is, Smite the lintel of the door of the temple, the chapter, smite it with such a blow, that the posts may shake, and the lintel, wounded them in the head, all of them; break down the door of God's house, or of the courts of his house, in token of this—that he is going out from it, and forsaking it, and then all judgments are breaking in upon it. Or it signifies the destruction of those in the first place, that should be as the door-posts to the nation for its defence, so that, they being broken down, it becomes as a city without gates and a people without an king, and the lintel, that is, the door, that the princes, who are as the posts, may shake; cut them in the head, cleave them down, all of them, as wood for the fire; and I will slay the last of them, the posterity of them, and their families, or the least of them, and all that are employed under them; or, I will slay them all, them and all that remain of them, till it comes to the last man; the slaughter shall be general. There is no living for those of whom God has said, I will slay them; no standing before his sword.

2. What effectual care is taken that none shall escape the execution of this sentence. This is enlarged upon here, and is intended for warning to all that provoke the Lord to jealousy: let sinners read it, and tremble: as there is no fighting it out with God, so there is no fleeing from it. His judgments, when they come with commission, as they will overawe the strongest that think to outface them, so they will overtake the swiftest that think to outrun them, v. 2. Those of them that flee, and take to their heels, shall soon be out of breath, and shall not fly away out of the reach of danger; for as sometimes the wicked flee when none pursueth, so he cannot flee away when God pursues, though he would find none out of his hand. Say, he that escapes of them, that thinks he has gained his point, he shall not be delivered; evil pursues sinners, and will arrest them.

This is here enlarged upon by showing that wherever sinners flee for shelter from God's justice, it will overtake them, and the shelter will prove but a refuge of lies; what David says of the thought of God's presence, (Ps. cxxxix. 7, 10.) is here said of the extent of God's power and justice. (1.) Hell itself, though it has its name in English from its being hilled, or covered over, or hidden, cannot hide them; (v. 2.) "Though they dig into hell, into the centre of the earth, or the darkest recesses of it, yet hence shall my hand take them, and bring them forth to be made public monuments of divine justice." The grave is a hiding-place to the righteous from the malice of the world, (Job iii. 17.) but it shall be no hiding-place to the wicked from the justice of God; from thence God's hands shall take them, when they shall rise in the great day to everlasting shame and contempt. (2.) Heaven, though it has its name from being heaved, or lifted up, shall not put them out of the reach of God's judgments as hell cannot hide them, so heaven will not. Though they climb up to heaven in their own conceit, yet hence will I bring them down. Those whom God brings to heaven by his grace shall bring down into hell, who have climbed thither themselves, by their own presumption, and confidence in themselves, will be brought down, and filled with shame. (3.) The top of Carmel, one of the highest parts of the dust of the world in that country, shall not protect them; "Though they hide themselves there, where they imagine nobody will look for them, I will find them there; not in their thickest bushes, nor in the darkest caves, in the top of Carmel, will serve to hide them." (4.) The bottom of the sea shall not serve to conceal them; though they think to hide themselves there, even there the judgments of God shall find them out, and lay hold on them; "Thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them; the crooked serpent, even the dragon that is in the sea, Is. xxvii. 1. They shall find their plague and death there where they hope to find shelter and protection; diving will stand them in no more stead than climbing. (5.) Remote countries will not be friend to them, nor shall lesser judgments excuse them from greater; (v. 4.) Though they go into captivity before their enemies, who carry them to places at a great distance, and mingle them with their enemies, andamong strangers, to be lost, yet that shall not serve their turn; Thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them; the sword of the enemy, or one another's sword, when God judges, he will overcome. That which binds on all this, and makes their escape impossible, and their ruin inevitable, is, that God will set his eyes upon them for evil, and not for good. As the many ways of men, are upon all men, and upon all the ways of men, upon some for good, to show himself strong on their behalf, but upon others for evil, to take notice of their sins, (Job xiii. 27.) and take all opportunities of punishing them for their sins. Their case is truly miserable, who have the providence of God, and all the dispensations of it, against them, working for their hurt. What a great and mighty God he is, that pass es this sentence upon them, and will take the executing of it into his own hands. Threatenings are more or less formidable, according to the power of him that threatens. We laugh at impotent wrath; but the wrath of God is not so, it is omnipotent wrath; who knows the power of it? What he had before said he would do, (ch. viii. 8.) is here repeated, that he would make the land melt and tremble, and all that dwell therein mourn, that the judgment should rise up wholly like a flood, and the country should be drowned, and laid under water, as by the flood of Egypt, v. 5. But is he able to make his words good? Yes, certainly he is, he does but touch the land, and it melts, touch the mountains and they smoke; he can do it with the greatest ease, for, (1.) He is the Lord God of hosts, who undertakes to do it; the God who has all the power in his hand, and all creatures at his beck and call, who, having made them all, and given them their several capacities, makes what use he pleases of them, and all their powers. Very miserable is the case of those who have the Lord of hosts against them, for they have hosts against them, the whole creation at war with them. (2.) He is the Creator and Governor of the upper world. It is he that builds his stories in the heavens, the celestial orbs or spheres, one over another, as so many stories in a high and stately palace; they are his, for he built them at first, when he said, Let there be a firmament, and he made the
firmament, and he builds them still, is continually building them, not that they need repair, but by his power he continually upholds them; his power is the pillars of heaven, by which it is borne up. Now he that has the command of those stories, is certainly to be feared, for from thence, as from a castle, he can fire upon his enemies, or cast upon them great hail stones, as on the Canaanites, or make the stars in their courses, the furniture of those stories, to fight against them, as against Sisera. (3.) He has the command of all the ground and sea, too, in which we dwell, the terræaqueous globe, both earth and sea, so that, which way soever his enemies think to make their escape, he will meet them, or to make opposition, he will match them. Do they think to make a land-fight of it? He has sounded his troph in the earth, his troop of guards, which he has at command, and makes use of for the protection of his subjects, and the punishment of his enemies. All the creatures on earth make one bundle, (as the margin reads it,) one bundle of arrows, out of which he takes what he pleases to discharge against the persecutors, Ps. vii. 13. They are all one army, one body; so closely are they connected, and so harmoniously and so much in concert do they act for the accomplishing of their Creator’s purposes. Do they think to make a sea-fight of it? He has the command of all the waters of the sea at command; even its waves, the most tumultuous, rebellious waters, do obey him. He calls for the waters of the sea in the course of his common providence, causes vautours to ascend out of it, and pours them out in showers, the small rain and the great rain of his strength, upon the face of the earth; this was mentioned before as a reason why we should seek the Lord, (ch. v. 8,) and make him our Frie. P. 6. 9. (4.) The reason why we should fear him, and dread having him our Enemy.

3. How justly God passes this sentence upon the people of Israel. He does not destroy them by an act of sovereignty, but by an act of righteousness; for, (v. 8,) it is a sinful kingdom, and the eyes of the Lord are upon it, discovering it to be so; he sees the great sinfulness of it, and therefore he will destroy it from off the face of the earth. Note, When those kingdoms that in name and profession were holy kingdoms, and kingdoms of priests, as Israel was, become sinful kingdoms, no other can be expected than that they should be cut off and abandoned. Let sinful kingdoms, and sinful families, and sinful persons too, see the eyes of the Lord upon them, observing all their wickedness, and reserving the notice of it for the day of reckoning and recompense. This being a sinful kingdom, see how light God makes of it, v. vii. (1.) Of the relation wherein he stood to it: Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? A sad change! children of Israel become as children of the Ethiopians! (1.) They were so in themselves, that was their sin; it is a thing to be greatly lamented, that so high a people, that very people of the children of the Ethiopians; the children of godly parents degenerate, and become the reverse of those that went before them. Those that were well educated and trained up in the knowledge and fear of God, and set out well, and promised fair, throw off their profession, and become as bad as the worst. How is the gold become dim! (2.) They were so in God’s esteem, and for that reason were punished; he valued them no more, though they were children of Israel, than if they had been children of the Ethiopians. We read of one in the title of Ps. vii. that was Cush, (an Ethiopian, so some understand it,) and yet a Benjamin. Those that by birth and profession are children of Israel, if they degenerate, and become wicked and vile, are to God no more than children of the Ethiopians. This is an intimation of the rejection of the unbelieving Jews in the days of the Messias; because they embraced not the doctrine of Christ, the kingdom of God was taken from them, they were unchurched and cast out of covenant, became as children of the Ethiopians, and are so to this day. And it is true of those that are called Christians, but do not live up to their name and profession, that rest in the form of piety, but live under the power of reigning iniquity, that they are to God as children of the Ethiopians; he rejects them, and punishes them, and the more he sees of the favours he had conferred upon them; they thought he would not, he could not, cast them off, and put them upon a level with other nations, because he had done that for them which he had not done for other nations, whereby they thought he was bound to them, so as never to leave them. No, says he. The favours showed you are not so dishonouring as you think they are; Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? It is true, I have; but I have also brought the Philistines from Caphtor, or Cappadocia, where they were either natives, or captives, or both; they are called the remnant of the country of Caphtor, (Jer. xlvii. 4.) and the Philistines are joined with the Caphtorim, Gen. x. 14. In like manner, the Syrians and the Chaldeans, and the Egyptians, they had been carried away thither, 2 Kings xi. 9. Now if God’s Israel lose the peculiarity of their holiness, they lose the peculiarity of their privileges: and what was designed as a favour of special grace shall be set in another light, shall have its property altered, and shall become an act of common providence; if professors liken themselves to the world, God will level them with the world. And if we live not up to our privileges, though God be to us with mercies, we forfeit the honour and comfort of them.

How graciously God will separate between the precious and the vile, in the day of retribution. Though the wicked Israelites be as the wicked Ethiopians, and their being called Israelites shall stand them in no stead, yet the pious Israelites shall not be as the wicked ones; no, the Judge of all the earth will do right, more right than to save the righteous with the wicked, Gen. xvi. 25. His eyes are upon the sinful kingdom, to spy out those in it who preserve their integrity, and swim against the stream, who sigh and cry for the abominations of their land, and they shall be marked for preservation, so that the destruction shall not be total; I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, but ruin them by wholesale, and in the gross, good and bad together, but I will distinguish, as becomes a righteous Judge. The house of Israel shall be sifted as corn is sifted; they shall be greatly hurried, and shaken, and tossed, but still in the hands of God, in both his hands, as the sieve in the hands of him that sifts; (v. 9,) I will sift the house of Israel among all nations; wherever they are shaken and scattered, God will have his eye upon them, and will take the good to himself. Now what the Lord had marked was the thing he designed in sifting them. (1.) The righteous ones among them, that are as the solid wheat, shall none of them perish; they shall be delivered either from, or through, the common calamities of the Kingdom; not the least grain shall fall on the earth, so as to be lost and forgotten; not the least stone, so the word is, for the good corn is not lighted on, as it were, in a common win with which we call light corn. Note, Whatever shakings there may be in the world, God does, and will, effectually provide that none who are truly his, shall be truly miserable. (2.) The wicked ones among them, who are hardened in their sins, shall all of them perish, v. 10. See what a height of impiety they are come to; They say, The evil shall not overtake
and prevent us, They think they are innocent, and do not deserve punishment, or, that the profession they make of relation to God will be their exemption and security from punishment, or, that they shall be able to make their part good against the judgment of God; that shall flee so secretly from them, that they shall not overtake them, or guard so carefully against them, that they shall not prevent or surprise them. Note, Hope of impunity is the deceitful refuge of the impudent. But see what it will come to at last; all the sinners that thus flatter themselves, and afford God, shall die by the sword, the sword of war, which to them shall be the sword of divine vengeance; yea, though they be the sinners of my people; for their profession shall not be their protection. Note, Evil is often nearest those that put it at the greatest distance from them.

11. In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: 12. That they may possess the remainder of Edom, and all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this. 13. Behold, the days, saith the Lord, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. 14. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. 15. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.

To Him whom all the proverbs bare witness, this prophet, here in the close, bears his testimony, and speaks of that day, those days that shall come, in which God will do great things for his church, by the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah, for the rejecting of which the rejection of the Jews was foretold in the foregoing verses. The promise here is said to agree to the planting of the Christian church, and in that to be fulfilled, Acts xv. 15, 17.

1. It is promised that in the Messiah, the kingdom of David shall be restored; (v. 11.) the tabernacle of David it is called, his house and family, which, though great and fixed, yet, in comparison with the kingdom of heaven, was mean and moveable as a tabernacle. The church militant, in its present state, dwelling as in shepherds’ tents, to feed, as in soldiers’ tents, to fight, is the tabernacle of David. God’s tabernacle is called the tabernacle of David, because David desired and chose to dwell in God’s tabernacle for ever, Ps. Ixi. 4. Now, (1.) These words were fallen and gone to decay, the royal family was so impoverished, its power abridged, its honour stained, and laid in the dust; for many of that race degenerated, and in the captivity it lost the imperial dignity; sore breaches were made upon it, and at length it was laid in ruins. So it was with the church of the Jews; in the latter days of it, its glory was departed, it was like a tabernacle broken down, and brought to ruin, in respect both of purity and of prosperity. (2.) By Jesus Christ these tabernacles were raised and rebuilt. In him God’s covenant with David had its accomplishment; and the glory of that house, which was not only sullied, but quite sunk, revived again, the breaches of it were closed, from its ruined state, calling the Gentiles, and God’s taking out of them a people for his name. Note, While the world stands, God will have a church in it, and if it be fallen down in one place, and among one people, it shall be raised up elsewhere.

2. It is promised that that kingdom shall be enlarged, and the territories of it shall extend far, by the accession of many countries to it; (v. 12.) that the house of David may possess the remainder of Edom, and of all the heathen, that is, that Christ may have them given him for his inheritance, even the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, Ps. ii. 8. Those that had been strangers and enemies, shall become willing, faithful subjects to the son of David, shall be added to the church, among those that were rejected by God, will belong by the grace of God, that belong to the election of grace, and are ordained to eternal life; (Acts xiii. 48.) for it is true of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, that the election hath obtained, and the rest were blinded, Rom. xi. 7. Christ died to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad, here said to be the least that were called by his name; the promise is that all that were called by my name shall be as great as any of them, and the Lord our God shall call, Acts ii. 39. St. James expounds this as a promise, that the residue of men should seek after the Lord, even all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called. But may the promise be depended upon? Yes, the Lord saith this, who doeth thing who can do it, who has determined to do it, the power of whose grace is engaged for the doing of it, and with whom saying and doing are not two things, as they are with us.

3. That in the kingdom of the Messiah there shall be great plenty, and abundance of all good things, that the country produces, (v. 13.) The ploughman shall overtake the reaper; there shall be such a plentiful harvest every year, and so much corn to be gathered in, that it shall be a common, even till another year; when it is time to begin to plough again, and in like manner the vintage shall continue till seed-time; and there shall be such abundance of grapes, that even the mountains shall drop new wine into the vessels of the grape-gatherers, and the hills that were dry and barren, shall be moistened, and shall melt with the fatness, or me lowness (as we may read it) of the year, Ps. Ixxvii. 8. This must certainly be understood of the abundance of spiritual blessings in heavenly things, which all those are, and shall be, blessed with, who are in sincerity added to Christ and his church; they shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of God’s house, with the graces and comforts of his Spirit; they shall have bread, the bread of life, which is better than gold, and all manner of divine consolations to make them glad, meat indeed, and drink indeed, all the benefit that comes to the souls of men from the word and Spirit of God; these had been long confined to the vineyard of the Jewish church, divine revelation, and the power that attended it, were to be found only within that enclosure; but in gospel-times, the mountains and hills of the Gentile world shall be enriched with these privileges by the gospel of Christ preached,
and professed, and received in the power of it. When great multitudes were converted to the faith of Christ, and nations were born at once, when the preachers of the gospel were always caused to triumph in the success of their preaching, then the ploughman overtook the reaper; and when the Gentile churches were enriched in all utterance and in all knowledge, and in all manner of spiritual gifts, (1 Cor. i. 5.) then the mountains dropped sweet wine.

4. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall be well peopled; as the country shall be replenished, so shall the cities be; there shall be mouths for this meat; v. 14. Those that were carried captives, shall be brought back out of their captivity; their enemies shall not be able to detain them in the land of their captivity, nor shall they themselves incline to settle in it, but the remnant shall return, and shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them, shall form themselves into Christian churches, and set up pure doctrine, worship, and discipline among them, according to the gospel-charter, by which Christ's cities are incorporated; and they shall enjoy the benefit and comfort thereof, they shall plant vineyards, and make gardens, though the mountains and hills drop wine, and the privileges of the gospel-church are laid in common, yet they shall enclose for themselves, not to monopolize these privileges, to the exclusion of others, but to appropriate and improve these privileges, in communion with others, and they shall drink the wine, and eat the fruit, of their own vineyards and gardens; for they that take pains in religion, as men must do about their vineyards and gardens, shall have both the pleasure and the profit of it. The bringing again of the captivity of God's Israel, which is here promised, may refer to the cancelling of the ceremonial law, which had been long to God's Israel as a yoke of bondage, and the investing of them in the liberty wherewith Christ came to make his church free, Gal. v. 1.

5. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall take such deep rooting in the world, as never to be rooted out of it; (v. 15.) I will plant them upon their land. God's spiritual Israel shall be planted, by the right hand of God himself, upon the land assigned them, and they shall no more be pulled up out of it, as the old Jewish church was. God will preserve them from throwing themselves out of it by a total apostacy, and will preserve them from being thrown out of it by the malice of their enemies; the church may be corrupted, but shall not quite forsake God, may be persecuted, but shall not quite be forsaken of God, so that the gates of hell, neither with their temptations, nor with their terrors, shall prevail against it. Two things secure the perpetuity of the church: (1.) God's grants to it; it is the land which I have given them; and God will confirm and maintain his own grants. The part he has given to his people, is that good part which shall never be taken from them; he will not revoke his grant, and all the powers of earth and hell shall not invalidate it. (2.) Its interest in him: He is the Lord thy God, who has said it, and will make it good, thou, O Israel, who shall reign for ever, as thine unto all generations. And because he lives, the church shall live also.